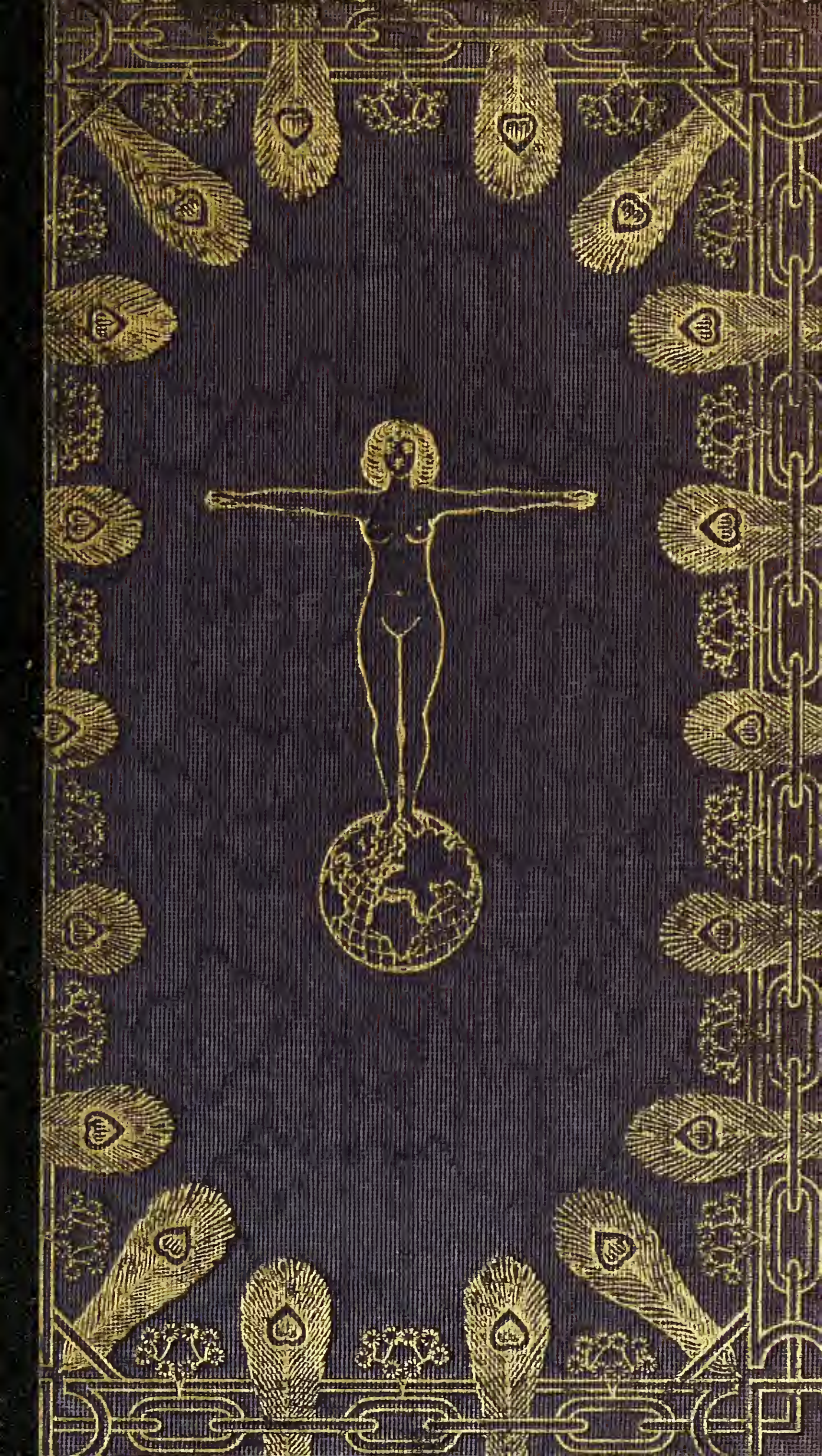

LADY GODIVA RIDING THROUGH COVENTRY

After the painting by Jules Lefebvre.

WOMAN

In all ages and in all countries

WOMEN OF ENGLAND

by

BARTLETT BURLEIGH JAMES, Ph.D.

Of Western Maryland College

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Preface

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PREFACE

IT is no slight task to follow out the windings of a single thread in the infinite weave of society and by loosing it from the general mesh to show how dependent is the pattern of life and custom upon its presence. Such a task was presented in the endeavor to trace along from remotest times to the present day the influence of woman upon the life and character, the efforts and ideals, of that race which has come to be known as English, although this name may not properly be used until time has spun into the vista of the past peoples as vigorous, if not influential, as the one that stands, the inheritor of their virility, at the apex of modern civilization, whose women, clasping hands throughout the British Empire, form a splendid chain of hope for womankind in all the world.

Whether or not continuity and sequence, relation and effect, have been maintained in the retraversing of the footsteps of woman in all ages of the history of those isles where femininity has flowered in the most gracious blossoms, it remains for the reader to say. Certain it is that unaffected pleasure has been afforded the writer in his attempt to draw aside the curtain that the muse of history jealously employs to shut from view the inner sanctuary in which she preserves those vital relics, the destruction of which by some inconceivable iconoclast would bring death to the world for lack of materials for reflection and

inspiration. In treating of the prehistoric periods, although the brush necessarily has been laid broadly upon the canvas, fancy has been kept in the leash of fact, and imagination given no more play than its legitimate function. Still, the results of inquiry into the status of woman at this far remote period furnish a fulcrum upon which to rest the lever of investigation, in order to lift into view the strata of undoubted history of the periods immediately subsequent.

As fast as the widening of social interest afforded the materials for use, the writer sought to employ them, until, like a mountain rivulet, ever widening until it reaches the plain, he found himself embarrassed by the wealth of fact that told the marvellous story of the most notable emancipation in the history of mankind,—the complete separation of English woman from the trammels, inherent and environmental, imposed upon the sex. If the successive chapters disclose the philosophical relations of woman in society, it will be because the reader has not failed to grasp the fact that in any such theme as the one treated mere continuity of subject matter would constitute a chronicle and not a history; and that the writer, while seeking not to make obtrusive the connective tissue, has nevertheless given ample scope for the reflective mind to see that which has ever been present to his own.

As to the actual materials employed in constructing the book, it is sufficient to say that no important writer upon any period of the history of the British Isles or their people has been overlooked, and that the passing over of the political and constitutional phases in order to select the purely social has been an endeavor much furthered by the writers to whom reference is made in the body of the work, and many others who could not be mentioned without burdening the text. Each fibre of the thread of interest

has been taken hold of at the point of its appearance, and then not lost sight of until the end. So that if one is interested in the subject of costume, he may find a full and accurate description of dress from the time when tattooing was deemed largely sufficient up to the period of the present, when the variety of feminine attire baffles description. But more serious subjects, such as woman's rights, from the recognition of primal rights in her person to the setting forth of the modern programme under that description, are consecutively treated through the chapters.

A debt of gratitude cannot be discharged, but some recognition may be made of the author's sense of the service rendered him in the writing of this work by Dr. John Martin Vincent, associate professor of history in Johns Hopkins University, whose courses in the social history of England furnished the first incentive to range in that field and a guide through the labyrinth of manners and customs of the English people. Thanks are due to Mr. J. A. Burgan, whose close and careful reading of the proof is not the least factor in the presentation of the book free, as the writer believes, of the errors that only eternal vigilance may exclude.

BARTLETT BURLEIGH JAMES.

Chapter I

The Women of Prehistoric Britain

I

THE WOMEN OF PREHISTORIC BRITAIN

It is to the unpremeditated contributions of savage and barbarous conditions of existence that we must look for those primal elements of social order which became fundamental in English life and character. Insomuch as those contributions are intimately connected with woman's life and work, they must be sought out and set in order if we are to trace the development of the status of the women of Britain. In doing this, the confines of history proper must be disregarded and the inquiry commenced at the earliest period at which the student of the geology of Britain has been able to discover evidences of human occupancy of the country. If a consecutive account of the history of woman in Britain were intended, we should be content to begin the story with the woman of the Neolithic or Polished Stone Age, for to such remote times may be traced the stream of life and institutions in England; but, as we shall aim not solely at consecutiveness, but at completeness as well in our record of woman's life in the British Isles, it will be necessary to go back even further into the geologic ages, when Britain was still a part of the mainland and its inhabitants the same roving savage tribes that wandered over all central Europe.

From those barren ages of the Pleistocene era, which were cut off from the Neolithic by great stretches of time

that cannot be certainly calculated, and during which there was a lapse in the human occupancy of the country, little of value can be derived. Their chief worth for our purpose is the picture which they present of the initial stage of human organization, the study they afford of woman in her relations to a thoroughly savage stage of society, an era of hunting—that of the Paleolithic or Rough Stone Age, when there was fixity neither of residence nor of relations, and when man's contest with savage nature about him was dependent in its issues upon the slight advantage furnished him by the rude weapons that he fashioned from flint flakes. During the Polished Stone era, when inhabitants are next met with in Britain, the social organization presented is that of the pastoral stage, which marks a great advance over the hunting.

In all the progressions of uncivilized life, woman is but a part of the phenomena of her times, but in the history of English civilization she appears as one of its most active forces. These, then, are the two correlated views of woman in the history of English life that will be constantly held in mind during our whole study,—woman as a social fact, and woman as a social factor; showing her as a product, as affected by the customs, laws, or manners of a given time, and again as an influencing factor in the institutions or the manners of those times. Had her life been as circumscribed as that of the women of a cultured people, English civilization would not owe to woman the recognition which is her due as a creative force in the arts, in science, in literature, in religion, and in all the ever-widening circle of human interests. An understanding and estimate of her influence in these more conspicuous relations will depend upon a proper appreciation of the English home as the principal source of the English woman's dignity and power. Much that has entered into the ideals

of the English race can be fully accounted for only in the light of home ideals. By such considerations, then, as have been thus far set forth, we shall be guided in our endeavor to tell the story of woman's life in the ages of Britain's history.

The people of the earliest part of the Pleistocene age had no real home life, nor was there any social organization excepting that into which men were forced by the necessity for mutual aid in the struggle with the forces of savage nature. This element of self-protection was the only factor that entered into the organized life of those earliest inhabitants of Britain,—the people of the river-drift and the caves. In this combat between savage man and savage beast were produced the first instruments pointing to civilization,—weapons for defence and offence.

The life of woman among the men of the river-drift was of the most debased order. The only employment of the men was hunting the gigantic savage beasts that ranged through the forests. While the males were in pursuit of the rhinoceros, the lion, the hippopotamus, and the great antlered deer that were a part of the fauna of the whole of that section of the continent of Europe of which Britain in those remote times formed a part, the females roamed through the densely wooded forests whose only clearings were those made by the ravages of fire. Clad in the skins of beasts but little lower in the scale of being than themselves, and with their naked offspring about them, they wandered about in search of berries or, with no better aids than sharpened sticks, dug up the roots which they dried and stored for the days when the results of the chase fell short of the needs of the people. On the home-coming of the hunters to the place where, in their nomadic wanderings, they had erected temporary shelters, the women prepared the miserable meal. By skilfully

rubbing together pieces of hard wood, a fire was soon obtained; if fortune had attended the chase, the hastily skinned animals were cut up with flint flakes, and the meat was thrown upon the stones placed in the fire for that purpose. There were no niceties of taste to be considered, so the half-cooked and badly smoked flesh was snatched from the fire and eaten with no more decorum than might be found in the meals of the cave-hyena that, under the shadows of night, skulked through the underbrush and noisily devoured the remnants of the hunters' feast.

On the day following the hunt, the women undertook the arduous work of curing the skins of the slain animals. In the initial stage of the process they used stone scrapers sharp of edge and probably set in bone handles. Hundreds of these implements have been found. The women acquired great dexterity in this, one of their customary employments; and while the men lounged about, resting from the fatigue of the hunt, or occupied themselves with painting their bodies with ochre, or tracing, with a splinter of stone, rude devices on pieces of polished reindeer antler, the work of the women went industriously on.

Men of such undisciplined natures as those of the people of the river-drift could not exist together harmoniously; very little, indeed, was necessary to embroil them in bitter strife. Their women were a frequent cause of bloody encounters, a circumstance which was due to the fact that there was no permanence in the relations of the sexes; such rights—seldom individual—to the women as were vested in the men were always those acquired by brute force, and held good only so long as the fancy or strength of the men permitted. In such a promiscuous society there was nothing to suggest the home of civilization. To men, women simply represented their chief possession

and were held by them in common, like other forms of property.

Such an age was almost as barren of material utilities as of moral conceptions; so that one looks in vain for evidence of the knowledge of such arts as are commonly associated with the life of women in savage societies. Basket work, weaving, and spinning were occupations of which, it is thought, the women of those times knew nothing. Pottery was unknown; gourds served for drinking cups and for the holding of liquids, and were used also for cooking. Among the memorials of woman of these remote times appears no trace of the charms and fetiches which usually accompany the performance of domestic duties among primitive races. Nothing lower in the scale of human existence could be imagined than the lives of these women of the river-drift, to whom nature made no appeal save that of fear of its furious moods, to whom sex meant not the possibilities of pure wifehood and motherhood, but servitude to the demands of passion. When children were not vigorous, or when for any reason their nurture became irksome, they were ruthlessly slain, even by the mothers themselves; and every woman knew that the lot of abandonment was reserved for her when she could no longer fulfil the hard conditions of her existence.

In some respects, the life of the women of the cave-dwellers of the later Pleistocene period was of a higher order than that which we have just described—not that there was any essential difference in the social grade of the two peoples, but that the cave-dwellers had learned to make better implements of the chase and to fashion more effectively all their weapons and tools. The greater security to life afforded by these improvements and the greater assurance of subsistence led to more settled living, and thereby afforded an opportunity to develop a social

organization that should have for its basis something of greater permanence than a temporary need. While it would be hazardous, then, to assume too much in the way of improvement in the life of the women of the cave-dwellers over that of the women of the river-drift, yet it should be borne in mind that in states of society such as those represented by these remote inhabitants of Britain, even a slight advance in the scale of living marks an epoch of progress.

The cave-dwellers succeeded the people of the river-drift as inhabitants of Britain, and the combined occupancy of the country by these peoples covered a vast stretch of time. It is very probable that their periods overlapped, and that the later people were in part contemporary with the former. Though the people of the river-drift and the dwellers in caves may have avoided intermixture, as have the Esquimaux and the American Indians, yet there is nothing absolutely to preclude the idea that such race distinction was observed during great periods of time. So that all we have to say of the women of the cave-dwellers may be equally applied to the women of the later times of the river-drift.

The cave-dwellers, like their predecessors, were hunters. For their dwellings they chose the caves from which they had driven out the bear and the lion. These rude homes the women hung about with the skins of the horse or the wolf, and spread on the floor for couches the hides of these or of other beasts that had fallen by the arrows of the hunters or had been ensnared in their pitfalls. Here the tribe remained until the scarcity of game or the assault of enemies impelled it to migrate. Where there were no caves, huts were constructed. These were framed with the branches and trunks of trees and covered with skins and hides.

The woman of the cave-dwellers was a sturdy specimen of her sex, and the long and arduous migrations in which the burden of the work fell upon her shoulders were probably borne with little sense of hardship. We can imagine a tribe, travelling afoot, for as yet neither the horse nor any other animal had been domesticated: the men with their long fish spears across their backs, their stone arrows hanging at their sides, and their bows in hand, always alert for the wild beasts with which they waged a relentless warfare; the women laden with all the paraphernalia of their simple existence, many with a babe slung at the back, and their naked, uncouth progeny following or gambolling about them. The strange personal appearance of both men and women would add to the oddity of the scene in modern eyes, for their bodies were painted in grotesque patterns, and, if the rigors of the season made any covering necessary, a simple skin, laced about them with reindeer sinews, sufficed for clothing. On coming to a fresh hunting region, near to some body of water or flowing stream, where the game would naturally come to slake their thirst,—perhaps upon the grassy plains that still extended over what is now the English Channel and formed a part of the original land connection with the continent,—they paused for another term of settled residence. Again the caves were resorted to, or rudely thatched huts were erected. If the wild beasts pressed the wanderers too hard, they sometimes had recourse to huts erected upon rough stone heaps in the midst of an oozy swamp.

While the men gave themselves wholly to hunting, the women went about their domestic pursuits. To them was assigned the making of such scanty clothing as was imperatively required in the cold season; for though the crude carvings of the time invariably represent the hunters as

naked, it cannot be concluded from such evidence that clothing was not worn at all. The extremely serviceable reindeer sinews served the women for thread, and a thin reindeer prong, pierced through at the thick end, made a satisfactory needle. The skins were simply sewed together at the edges, without shaping, but with apertures through which to pass the head and arms. The women devised many ornaments; these consisted of amulets and necklaces made of bone, ivory, and shells, which, shaped and polished, they painstakingly punctured and fastened together in long strings for the decoration of their necks and arms. Apparently, it was not customary to wear foot covering of any kind, as the feet of such skeletons of this period as have been found are so symmetrical as to preclude the probability of constraint during growth. The men may have worn some form of foot covering when engaged in such exposed work as spearing the seal in the winter season; but the women, who remained in shelter during the severities of the winter, did not avail themselves of any such protection. The fact that gloves were worn by men seems to be established by some of the rude etchings of the period, for in them such articles appear to be discernible.

The sanitary condition of the homes of these hunting tribes was of the worst description; the offal and refuse were thrown at the very doors of the cave, there to decay and poison the air. The caves themselves were smoke-begrimed and foul, for house cleaning had not yet entered into the economy of woman. While, by reason of their simple, open-air life, they were a vigorous race, the ills to which the cave-dwellers fell a prey, the injuries they suffered in warfare or from the attacks of wild beasts, or the diseases contracted through unsanitary living, must have been sources of great dread to them, as they were without

any medical knowledge of which we have trace. When the women, particularly, became too sick to perform their allotted tasks, they were carried out to die or to become the victims of savage beasts; but this was only one of the inevitable phases of an existence that was replete with tragedies.

From the evidence afforded by the great abundance of arrow heads and spear points surviving from this period, there is no doubt that the cave men were much given to warfare. Aside from the natural pugnacity and ferocity of savage races, which lead them to fight upon very little provocation, there was with the cave-dwellers another source of constant hostility. As has been stated with reference to the river-drift people, the women were not permanently attached to the men. It is just as true that they were not permanently attached to their tribes, for when, through disease or the ravages of wild beasts, the women of any horde became greatly diminished in number, their ranks were recruited by forays upon other tribes. These attacks for the purpose of stealing the women of their enemies were especially provocative of fierce conflicts, as the depletion of its stock of women often seriously crippled a tribe and sometimes even threatened its extinction. Such forcible transfers of ownership must have added greatly to the hardness of the woman's lot, for by such means many mothers were permanently separated from their offspring.

The weight of probability and of evidence seems to leave little room for doubt that the early inhabitants of Britain were cannibals. While there was no scarcity of game as a rule, it is quite likely that these savage peoples, as those of the same grade of culture in all times, when experiencing the delirium of a victory over their enemies, put to death by cruel tortures the unhappy captives that

fell into their hands, and then, to complete their triumph, roasted and ate the flesh of the slain. Aside from the deductive probability of the case, human bones dating back to this period have been found along with the remains of weapons and in association with the ashes of camp fires; and in such cases the bones have invariably been broken, in order to extract from them their marrow. The story of the battle, the tortures, and the feast is eloquently suggested by the silent memorials that have been preserved through the lapse of ages. As we picture the far-off scene of human savagery, the figure of woman flits through the lights and shadows of the horrid orgy: for she it was who prepared the gruesome repast; it was in defence of her, perhaps, that the fierce battle was fought; some of her own near of kin, it may be, she has been forced to prepare for the unnatural appetites of her enemies. Possibilities! but read in the light of the times, they become probabilities, and probabilities furnish much of the data of history.

The tragedy of woman's life is again brought before us with startling vividness when we look upon the skull of a woman of this remote race, as it lies in a cave, with a little stone hatchet beside it, where it was ruthlessly cast after the commission of a bloody crime; for in that skull is a jagged hole into which fits the blade of the hatchet. The scene, sketched from a remote past, might have been an occurrence of yesterday, so close to us is it brought by the silent witnesses; these and similar relics disclose the sad lot of woman in that savage society.

There are fuller evidences of the state of domestic resources among the women of the cave-dwellers than with those of the river-drift. The remains show, too, a greater variety and adaptation; for while there is no clear proof of the existence of pottery, yet the cave people appear not

to have lacked substitutes for it. Vessels for boiling meats were probably fashioned of small stones cemented together, and they had, also, vessels of hollowed wood. The skulls of animals served well for drinking purposes, besides which receptacles for holding liquids were made from the skins of beasts. Water was heated by placing hot stones in a vessel containing it, by which means the fluid could be raised to any desired temperature. Long flint flakes set in handles answered for knives; when rounded at the edge, the same material made serviceable scrapers. Spoons were constructed from pieces of reindeer antlers, hollowed at the thick end, or if they were intended to be used to scoop out the marrow from bones, the tapered end was hollowed. For their food, the cave-dwellers, though they possessed no domesticated animals, had a wide choice of large and small game, birds, fish, reptiles, and grubs; to these they added edible roots and berries.

This almost indispensable domestic handicraft was not, however, the limit of their achievement in designing. We have seen that woman's thought and some of her activities were applied to the production of merely decorative objects. She had already acquired an appreciative taste for the auxiliary attractions of personal adornment. The art of designing certainly found a place in the occupations of these cave-dwellers, and the most familiar animated objects would be their necessary choice. Hence, we may readily conceive that, in the moments of respite from the chase, the rude artist of this age would make of the cave passages a canvas for his work and thereon delineate the animals whose importance to his existence rendered them the most interesting objects. Nor, for this reason, would his subject fail of appreciative criticism and of educational value.

It is impossible to state the nature or the extent of the social organization among these people, but that there must have been something of the sort there can be no doubt. It seems equally plausible that there could have been no recognition of law in the lives of these passionate savages, excepting as the will of some more than ordinarily forceful warrior was for the time so recognized. An association of this kind admitted of the sloughing of the groups whenever a difference of inclination or of interest suggested such a course. Promiscuity undoubtedly remained the characteristic form of the relation of the sexes, the conditions of life admitting of no more enduring relations.

The culture of the peoples of the river-drift and of the caves signified little in British civilization, as these shadowy tribes passed completely out of view. For a period of time that could be expressed only in the term of vague geological computation, the country remained devoid of inhabitants. Meantime, changes were wrought in Britain's physical features. The land became insular, although the subsidence that gave rise to the English Channel was not yet complete. In an indirect way, the earliest peoples may be said to have passed on the elements of their culture; for, while there was a lapse in the continuity of social development, the Neolithic races that are next met with in Britain became the inheritors of the culture of the ruder hunter stages of society represented by the river-drift and cave peoples.

The social grade of the Neolithic races was a great advance over that of the peoples last considered. Instead of bands of nomadic wanderers, we find a pastoral people whose migrations were doubtless periodical and made only in search of new pastures. Hunting did not form an important part of their lives, for their food was supplied by

the flesh of domesticated animals and the cereals that they raised for their own needs and, in the winter season, for those of their stock.

Although caves continued to be used to some extent for dwellings, they were not characteristic of the civilization of the times. Man had become a home builder. The evolution from the cave dwellings is seen in the style of houses that were first constructed. They consisted of pits dug to a depth of seven to ten feet, and about seven feet wide at the base. These pits were roofed over with a sort of thatch, filled in with imperfectly burnt clay. They were built singly and in groups, and were sometimes connected by a system of underground passages. Access was had to these dwellings by a slanting, shaftlike entrance. A pit village was usually stockaded to protect it against the assaults of foes. Outside it were the arable lands and the common pasture lands for the sheep and goats; enclosing these, the forest stretched out in all directions.

Looking down from one of the surrounding hilltops upon such a village, it would have presented to the eye of the observer the appearance of a number of round hillocks but little higher than the ground level. Thin lines of smoke, slowly ascending, would mark the places where the common meals were in course of preparation. As the traveller descended the hillside, his approach would be challenged by gaunt, savage sheep dogs, from whose attacks he would need to defend himself. As he passed out into the clearing, he would be confronted by the men, some of them tilling the soil, others acting as shepherds or swineherds. Perhaps a field of golden wheat would lend its beauty to the scene. Approaching the dwellings, the women would be seen at their several employments; some busy cutting up the meat and swinging it over the fires to roast, or

boiling it in pots with herbs and roots to make a savory stew, others mixing dough and spreading it upon flat stones over hot embers to bake. Sitting about on the rocks or squatting upon skins spread upon the ground, other women would be found busily making pottery, modelling the clay with their hands, and scratching upon it lines, circles, and pyramids in various combinations, or fashioning designs by pressing reindeer sinews into the substance. Still others would be discovered busily spinning and weaving flax and wool into fabrics for the clothing that marked one of the advances of the Neolithic people. In the distance would be heard the dull strokes of the stone axes with which, in the depth of the wood, the men felled the tall timber.

For the industries presented in this picture of a Neolithic village, there were suitable implements. For all domestic purposes, the art of pottery making had solved the question of satisfactory vessels. These were generally in two colors, either brown or black. The potter's wheel had not yet been invented, so that the vessels lacked the grace and uniformity of later work of the sort. Wheat was ground by means of a mortar and pestle. Knives for various uses, saws, and scrapers were all made of highly polished and very keen-edged flint flakes. The great superiority of their stone implements over those of earlier races has given a name to the people, but the culture of the Polished Stone Age reveals, as its most salient fact, not this, but rather the domestication of animals and the tilling of the soil. It is significant to note that these most characteristic features of the Polished Stone Age denote the advance of society in the arts of peaceful living. War was prevalent enough, but human development had discovered another line of advancement, and, by reason of the increased incentives to peaceful living, war was not

usually undertaken simply for the pleasure of fighting. Protection of flocks and herds, of cleared fields and settled homes, became the chief occasion of the wars waged by the Neolithic people.

In such a society as we have described, there is a community of interest that tends to give stability to the ties of relationship. The fairly settled state of life was undoubtedly accompanied by a social organization of some sort that could properly deal with the matters of individual rights. The family had become evolved from the horde; promiscuity had doubtless given place to polygamy, or, under the exceptional conditions of a greater number of men than of women, to polyandry. Neither of these forms of marriage carried with it the idea of fixity and of family responsibility.

A feature of the Neolithic age was its commerce. By a system of intertribal traffic, the simple commodities of the widely dispersed peoples of Europe became distributed among the various tribes. By this means, many articles not of domestic manufacture were added to the comfort of the people of Britain. Thus, the women were enabled to adorn themselves with jade beads that must have come from the region of the Mediterranean Sea, and even with gold ornaments from as distant points. These instances, however, were exceptional, and are to be accounted for in the same manner that we account for the most unlikely things in the possession of the tribes of Central Africa—by gradual hand-to-hand passage.

There was probably an absence of religious ideas among the predecessors of the Polished Stone races; but among the remains of the latter are ample proofs of the prevalence among them of such notions. Caves that once had served them as residences were later used for places of burial, the bodies being piled up with earth until the cavities were

completely filled. Accompanying human remains have been found urns, supposedly for burning incense, personal ornaments, implements, and weapons, placed there for the use of the dead. If the people possessed religious conceptions that led them to believe in an after life, there is no room for doubt that religion had a place in the economy of their living. The women of this time, then, could look forward to something better than abandonment to starvation after they became enfeebled by age or sickness, and they may not have lacked religious associations in their everyday life to give to it deeper meaning and interest.

From the foregoing sketch of her life, it is very clear that the condition of Neolithic woman, the range of her ideas, and the elements of her comfort, were much in advance of those of the woman of the Paleolithic period. The contributions to her existence were indeed elements of civilization, and formed the basis for all that the life of the sex has come to be. In the realm of institutions, the home was beginning to have a place and a meaning in the life of the people. Religion, also, had come to widen the horizon of life. Very crude, but real, elements of social progress were all these.

The succeeding age—the Bronze—has been credited with working as great a revolution in life and giving it as great an impetus as did the invention of gunpowder in the Middle Ages. It is certainly a fact that the invention of this beautiful alloy was looked upon by the ancients who lived close to its age as of incalculable importance in its influence upon civilization—a judgment that is confirmed by anyone who studies its abundant remains. Manufactures and commerce were important interests of the times: smelting furnaces and the smith's shop turned out beautiful specimens of wares of all sorts—shields, spears, arrow tips, cups of graceful pattern, vessels for all purposes,

ornaments, and the trimmings for the large boats made necessary by a wide commerce, were all manufactured beyond the needs of domestic consumption. The stimulated inventiveness of the people added many new articles of comfort to their lives.

The development of bronze was not original with the people of Britain, but was introduced through an invasion of bronze-using people. For this reason, the change made in the life of the people was radical, instead of being, as on the continent, a gradual process. The struggle that ensued between the bronze users and the stone users was a contest between an advanced civilization and one of a lower order; and its issue was predetermined. The newcomers became the controlling element in the country. The tendency of the new order of things was toward individualism. Personal ownership brought with it social grades, so that it is impossible to make statements with regard to the bronze people that apply equally to all the race.

But we are concerned with the conditions of the times only as the setting in which we are to study the life of woman. In the Bronze Age, there was introduced into her life nothing to be compared to the contributions made thereto in the preceding age. While her horizon was greatly broadened, and while she benefited by the improvements in living,—better facilities, comforts, and even luxuries,—yet the advance was along established lines. We may surely believe that closer intercourse with outside peoples brought a corresponding quickening of thought and an appreciation of the merits of grades of life higher than her own. There was no marked change in the style of dwellings of the people of the Bronze Age from those of the Neolithic period; but their furnishings were better, and, instead of the skins of wild animals,

those of domestic animals and, perhaps, woven and brightly dyed fabrics now served for couches, and were hung about the walls as a protection against dampness. The utensils of the home were varied and ornamental, the conventional patterns having given place to other, though still simple, designs. In the homes of the wealthy, knives and spoons and the finer grades of vessels were of bronze.

The dress of the women had now become something more than mere protection for the body. The skins of animals might still suffice for the clothing of the poor, but the rich man's attire consisted of well-bleached linens, and, doubtless, woollen fabrics as well. The garments made of these materials were probably dyed in rich colors, as the principles of dyeing were well understood. We can picture, then, a woman of the higher grade, dressed in a tunic, with a mantle of contrasting color, her hair done up in an elaborate coiffure and set off by a cap of goat or sheep skin. Projecting from under this would appear bronze hairpins, perhaps twenty inches in length, of ornamental design; indeed, her coiffure was such an elaborate affair that it is quite likely that she slept with it in a head rest, similar to those which we know were used by the lake-dwellers of Switzerland and are still used in Japan. Pendent from her neck hung strings of beads and ornaments made of bone, polished stone, bronze, and even glass and gold. Her arms were weighted with bracelets, and her legs were adorned with anklets.

Spinning, weaving, the milking of the goats, the making of curd and cheese, the modelling of pottery, the preparation of the meals, assisting with the outdoor work, and the care of her children, made up the round of woman's life in those days. But there was another element that had come to be a serious one in her existence, and that was religion. Although the form of the prevailing religious

belief is lost, yet we have evidence that it was elaborate enough to call for special places for its observance. Indeed, none of the remains of the Bronze Age are more instructive, or present food for more fruitful speculation as to the manner of life or the scope of mentality during that era, than the curious tumuli that show how closely associated in the common consciousness were religion and death; for these mounds were probably places both of worship and burial. These ideas still remain in such close connection that the vicinity of a church, and indeed the edifice itself, seems especially appropriate for the interment of the dead or for the depositing of crematory urns. Such religion as existed must have had its reflex influence upon woman's life and have entered into its duties; it may be that, as with the later Druids, she assisted in the public offices of worship.

Chapter II

The Women of Ancient Britain

II

THE WOMEN OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

FOR our survey of the women of the different and, to a considerable degree, distinct peoples of Britain, prior to their being brought under the influence of Roman culture, it will be convenient to take our stand at the beginning of the period of real history, which for Britain may be conveniently placed at the first century before Christ. A survey of woman at that time would, in the nature of the case, partake somewhat of the character of a composite picture. Still, it would include all important particulars, even though these might not, in all cases, be accurately assigned in point of time, or even precisely as to race. So gradual were the changes that were wrought in woman's existence during the revolution that followed the introduction of iron into the arts of Britain's life, that it will not be difficult to speak with approximate accuracy.

The data for our picture of the status and occupations of the women at the time under consideration will need to be drawn from archæological remains of different dates and of widely different races, as well as from the confused and often conflicting or even incredible accounts of early voyagers, to which may be added the vague allusions of legendary lore.

In considering the details of the life of woman during the period under consideration, the most salient fact is not

the influx and partial merging of different peoples resulting from the intercourse that had been opened up between the Britons and the nations of the continent; nor is it the impulse to civilization brought about by the use of iron in the manufacture of a multitude of articles of general convenience. Such influences and agencies were potent in society, working the transformation that found its expression, among other ways, in the lifting of woman to the plane of civilization that was introduced by the Romans; but, undoubtedly, the greatest contributing factor to the life of the age, and so the most important one in fixing the status of woman, was the trade relations that were developed with Britain by the peoples of the South and the remote East: the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Etruscans, the Greeks, and, later, the Romans. To the Phœnicians, that nation of traders, must be given the credit of the introduction into Britain of the higher products of many of those peoples whose civilizations were of an advanced type. It was the fleets of this enterprising people that brought into Britain quantities of finely wrought implements of various sorts: useful articles that greatly increased the comfort of life, as well as those of ornament and of dress. Among such imports were the jade beads and ornaments which the British women held in especial esteem; beads of glass, delicately marked and colored; ornaments of gold, sometimes inlaid with enamel in pleasing designs and colors; fine fabrics of different sorts; rings, brooches, necklaces, armlets, leg bands, and wares of many kinds. Such things not only added to the comfort and the sense of luxury of the women, but, as object lessons of art and elegance, they were in the highest degree educative. They stimulated woman's imagination and piqued her interest in regard to the women of those far distant lands, with whom such articles were in ordinary

use. We hear of travellers' tales, carried back by the early voyagers to Britain, which, by their incredible coloring, awakened the wonder of the Greeks; but probably as much amazement and interest were aroused among the Britons by the marvellous tales, told by the Phœnicians and other traders, concerning the nations among which were manufactured the articles brought by them to barter for the metals, furs, woods, and other products of Britain. In this way, a distorted knowledge of the outside world and of the accomplishments of highly civilized peoples came to be widely diffused among the more advanced of the rude inhabitants of Britain. The arrival of a ship in port was an event of absorbing interest; soon the women of the coast settlements would be seen busily traversing the narrow, winding paths by which the houses of a village were connected, to gossip with their neighbors about the latest bit of wonderful narrative picked up from the oddly garbed foreign sailors concerning the mighty nations of the remote parts of the earth, or to display some purchase—a piece of cloth of fine web or of bright colors, a chased fibula, a string of beads, or articles of like nature. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect upon the mentality and the life interest of the simple-minded yet keenly inquiring British women of the commerce which, at first occasional, gradually became regular and expanding, and by which Britain was brought out of its insular separateness into the broad current of the world's progress.

The population of Britain was large—as the Romans found when they came into the country. The people were collected into villages and towns which were ruled by chieftains who were frequently at war with one another. During such strife their women were hidden in caves or pits covered with brush; this was a necessary protective measure, for the loss of its women was the severest blow

a people could suffer. This division of the tribes into little warring factions was the cause of the country falling readily a prey to the Romans.

When we consider that the writers of the time had in view different elements of the population, it is less difficult to harmonize their conflicting statements. While there are contrary statements made as to the agriculture of the Romans, it seems to be a satisfactory reconciliation of these statements to regard the less progressive northern tribes as purely pastoral and the inhabitants of the other parts of the island as agriculturalists as well as herdsmen. After the Romans became established, wheat came to be one of the chief articles of export. The producers harvested this grain by cutting off the heads and storing them in pits under the ground. These pits were protected against frost. Each day the farmers took out the wheat longest stored, and ground it into meal. The process of removing the grain from the cob was, according to what we know of it, similar to the method still in use down to the seventeenth century in some parts of Britain. This consisted of twirling in the fire several heads of wheat, which the woman performing the operation held in her left hand, while with a stick held in her right hand she beat off the loosened grain at the very instant that the chaff was consumed. The grain was then usually ground in a hand mill, although there is reason to believe that water mills also were used to some extent. The meal was then mixed, and baked over the fire in little loaves, or flat cakes. The whole process occupied but a couple of hours.

The houses of the people, to which the women were confined the greater part of the winter, were mean little structures. They were circular in shape, and were made of wattles or wood, and sometimes of stone. These wigwam-like structures were roofed with straw, and had

as their sole external decoration the trophies of the chase and the battlefield. A chief's house was triumphantly adorned with the skulls of his enemies, nailed up against the eaves of the porch, among the horns and bones of beasts. Sometimes the heads of foes slain in battle were embalmed, and furnished gruesome ornamentation for the interior of the house. But notwithstanding these testimonials of a savage nature, there were evidences of comfort that had in them the indication of an approach to civilization. The houses were connected by narrow, tortuous paths, and were usually surrounded by a stockade as a protection against assault.

The dress of the women differed according to the wealth and the civilization of the various sections of the population. The tribes of the east and southeast, who were principally Celts, were the more civilized, while the Caledonians of the north—the Picts, or painted men, as they were commonly called—were far less advanced. The women of the Celts were of great personal attractiveness. They possessed a wealth of magnificent hair, were fair-complexioned and of splendid physique. To these graces of person they added fierce tempers; we are told that when the husband of one of them engaged in an altercation with a stranger, his wife would join strenuously in the controversy, and with her powerful "snow-white" arms, and her feet as well, deliver blows "with the force of a catapult." These vigorous British women were vain of their appearance and gay in their dress. Their costume consisted of a sleeved blouse, which was ordinarily confined at the waist; this garment partly covered trousers, worn long and clasped at the ankles. A plaid of bright colors was fastened at the shoulders with a brooch. They wore nothing on their heads, but displayed their hair fastened in a graceful knot at the neck.

They wove thin stuffs for summer wear, and felted heavy druggets for winter; the latter were said to be prepared with vinegar, and "were so tough that they would turn the stroke of a sword." Some of their clothes are described as "woven of gaudy colors and making a show." They were versed in the art of using alternate colors in the warp and woof so as to bring out the pattern of stripes and squares. Diodorus says of some of their patterns that the cloth was covered with an infinite number of little squares and lines, "as if it had been sprinkled with flowers," or was striped with cross bars, giving a checkered effect. The colors most in vogue were red and crimson; "such honest colors," says the Roman writer, "as a person had no cause to blame, nor the world a reason to cry out upon." Such were the fabrics with which the more civilized of the British women arrayed themselves, and the workmanship of which speaks volumes for their makers' industry and skill. The women were inordinately fond of ornaments, and had a plentiful supply from which to select. Their attire was not complete unless it included necklaces, bracelets, strings of bright beads,—made of glass or a substance resembling Egyptian porcelain,—and that which was regarded as the crowning ornament of every woman of wealth—a torque of gold, or else a collar of the same metal. A ring was at first worn on the middle finger, but later it alone was left bare, all the other fingers being loaded with rings.

Among the more primitive of the peoples of Britain, skins continued to be worn, if, as among the Picts, clothing were not dispensed with altogether. The women of these fierce tribes were too proud of the intricate devices in brilliant colors with which their bodies were tattooed to hide them in any way. These, so Professor Elton is inclined to think, were the people who introduced bronze

into Britain. They made continual and fierce attacks on their Celtic neighbors and carried off their women into captivity. And it was because of these attacks that the Anglo-Saxons were invited into Britain to champion the cause of the people, after the departure of the Romans had left the Britons to their own resources.

A period of peculiar interest and uncertainty was that of the Roman occupancy of the country, with its veneer of civilization and the introduction of Christianity, all of which was apparently swept aside by the conquering hordes of Teutons who came into Briton and laid the foundations for the English nation. It was a time of great changes in the standards of life and tastes, as well as of the morals of the British women. With the Romans came their inevitable arts of conciliation after conquest. Then followed the period of generous grants of public works—the baths, the theatres, the arena; then the Roman villa superseded the huts of the inhabitants. All was created under the ægis of the great mistress of the nations, and included strong fortifications. Civilization was advanced, but manliness was degraded. Effeminacy reduced the sturdy morals of the Briton to the plane of those of their conquerors. The abominable usage of the women finds expression in the bitter cry that the poet ascribes to the noble British queen, Boadicea: "Me they seized and they tortured, me they lashed and humiliated, me the sport of ribald veterans, mine of ruffian violators."

It is not a part of our work to even sketch the course of the Roman invasion in its path of blood and fire across the face of Britain, or the stubborn and sturdy opposition of the natives, the subjugation and the revolt of tribes—notably the Icenii, who cost the Romans seventy thousand slain and the destruction of three cities, but whose final conquest broke the backbone of opposition to the Roman

arms. All this is political history, and cannot concern us excepting in the immense effect it had upon the women of the land. It was they who bore the brunt of suffering, degradation, and, too frequently, slavery and deportation—customary incidents of the fierce spirit of the Roman conquests. But in spite of the miseries their coming entailed upon the people, the Roman rule had an admirable effect upon the country in promoting peace, in establishing regard for law, and in stimulating commerce. After they had become accustomed to the Roman method of legal procedure in the settlement of differences, the Britons were no longer ready to fly at one another's throat on the least provocation. The breaking up of their tribal distinctions led to a greater consolidation of the people and removed a cause of strife. But as the descendants of the defenders of Britain's liberties grew up amid Roman conditions of life that had permeated the whole population as far as the northern highlands, where the people proved invincible to the Roman arms, the habit of dependence upon the Roman legions for protection enervated the people to such an extent that they could interpose but faint resistance to the next invaders of the country—the conquering Angles, Jutes, and Saxons.

It is amid conditions of Roman conquest and control that we are now to consider more in detail the status of the British woman. Scattered along the borders of the woods, between the pasture lands and the hunting lands, could be found the homesteads of the Britons, before the rise of the Roman city. Each of these edifices was large enough to hold the entire family in its single room. They were built, generally, of hewn logs, set in a row on end and covered with rushes or turf. The family fire burned in the middle of the room, and, circling it, sat the members of the household at their meals. The same raised seat of rushes

served them at night for a couch. Under the prevailing tribal custom, three families, or rather three generations of the same family, from grandfather to grandson, occupied each dwelling. After the third generation the family was broken up, though all the members of it retained the memory of their common descent. It is not clear whether or not a strictly monogamous household was the type of family life. Certainly it is probable that such was not the case among the backward races of the interior. As to the advanced sections of the population, against the statement of contemporary observers that it was the practice of the British women to have a plurality of husbands, there is only the argument of improbability to be urged. The custom of several families living under the one roof and in the same room may have led the Romans into an erroneous conclusion.

Little is known as to the laws of the Britons in regard to the regulation of family. In the matter of divorce, if the couple had several children, the husband took the eldest and the youngest, and the wife the middle ones, although the merits of such a peculiar division do not appear. It would seem as if in the case of the youngest child, at least, the mother was the proper custodian, or at any rate the natural one. The pigs went to the man, and the sheep to the woman; the wife took the milk vessels, and the man the mead-brewing machinery. This was at variance with the later custom of England, for well on through the Middle Ages, both as a family employment and a public industry, brewing was accounted woman's occupation. To the husband went also the table and ware. He took the larger sieve, she the smaller; he the upper, and she the lower millstone of the corn mill. The under bedding was his, and the upper hers. He received the unground corn, she the meal. The ducks, the geese,

and the cats were her portion, while to his share fell the hens and one mouser.

The slight estimation in which women were held as compared with the value put upon men is indicated by the fact that a woman was legally rated at half the worth of her brother and one-third that of her husband. If a woman engaged in a quarrel, she was fined a specific sum for each finger with which she fought and for each hair she pulled from her adversary's head.

Among the customs in which women were concerned, those relating to marriage show that the assumption of family responsibility was regarded as a permanent relation, and their nature does not agree with Cæsar's description of the loose ties of matrimony among the Britons. It is entirely unlikely that the wives of the men were held by them in common. As has been already stated, such group marriages, if they existed, were localized among the rudest of the races of the country, whose general civilization had not elevated them to the point of appreciation of pure family life. Such, perhaps, were the small dark races descended from the Neolithic tribes and held in little esteem by the Celts. Among the Celts it was customary for the father of a bride to make a present of his own arms to his son-in-law. As will be seen later by a description of one of their dinners, the Celts preferred feasting to all other occupations, and their festivities were accompanied by the utmost conviviality. A wedding was an occasion for the most extravagant feasting, all the relatives of the contracting parties, to the third degree of kindred, assembling to eat and drink to the happiness of the newly wedded pair. The ceremony took place at the house of the bridegroom, and the bride was conducted thither by her friends. If the parties were rich, the pair made presents to their friends at the marriage festival; but if they

were poor, the reverse was the case, and presents were made to them by the guests. At the conclusion of the feast, the bride and bridegroom were conducted to their chamber by the whole company, with great merriment and amid music and dancing. The next morning, before rising, it was the rule for the husband to make his wife a present of considerable value, according to his circumstances. This was regarded as the wife's peculiar property.

The wives of the ancient Britons had not only the usual domestic duties to perform, but much of the outside work as well. Being of robust constitution, leading lives of simplicity and naturalness, maternity interfered but little with the round of their duties. The period was not wholly without its anxieties, however, as is shown by the custom among British women of wearing a girdle that was supposed to be conducive to the birth of heroes. The assumption of these girdles was a ceremony accompanied with mystical rites, and was a part of the Druidical ritual. The newborn babe was plunged into some lake or river in order to harden it, and as a test of its constitution; this was done even in the winter season. The early British mother always nursed her children herself, nor would she have thought of delegating this duty to another. The first morsel of food put into a male infant's mouth was on the tip of the father's sword, that the child might grow up to be a great warrior. As is frequently the case with primitive peoples, the Britons did not give names to their children until the latter had performed some feat or displayed some characteristic which might suggest for them a suitable name. It follows from this that all the names of the ancient Britons that have been preserved to us are significant. The youth were not delicately nurtured, and after passing through the perils of childhood, when the care of a mother

was imperative, it is probable that the mother had little to do with the training of her boy. Accustomed almost from infancy to the use of arms, as he grew older the boy added to his training athletic ordeals and feats of daring. Among the games to which he was accustomed was jumping through swords so placed that it was extremely difficult to leap quickly through them without being impaled. Youth was democratic, and, without any distinction, the children of the noble and the lowly, equally sordid and ill clad, played about on the floor or in the open field.

The Britons were noted for the warmth of their family affection. The mother was sure of the dutiful regard of her children and did not lack affectionate consideration from her husband. The aged were treated with a reverence in striking contrast to the heartlessness with which in earlier times the old were deserted to die or were put to death—a custom not unusual among primitive peoples. It is pleasant to think of the British matron inculcating into the minds of her children respect for age and the claims of relationship.

The law of hospitality was sacred to the ancient Briton. When a stranger sought entertainment at the home of one of them, no questions were asked as to his identity or his business, until after the meal. Indeed, it was frequently the case that such arrivals were made the excuse for a great feast, to which a number of friends were invited. The women soon had the preparation under way, and in due time the meat was roasting at the spit and the pot swinging on the crane over a roaring fire. While the mothers were employed in these occupations and in making bread, their daughters poured the fresh milk into the pitchers and filled the metal beakers and earthen jugs with home-brewed beer and mead. While the men exchanged stories of their hunting exploits and deeds of valor

in battle, the women carried on a constant buzz of suppressed speculation and remark concerning the guests. When the meal was ready, the women set it before the men upon fresh grass or rushes. The bread was served in wicker baskets. The guests and their hosts seated themselves upon a carpet of rushes, or upon dog or wolf skins placed near the open fireplace. While the men voraciously seized the steaming joints and carved from them long slices of meat, which they ate "after the fashion of lions," the women plied them with the beakers of foaming beverage, and the bards sang, to the music of harps, the boastful exploits of some local chieftain. It was a strange thing if the feast and conviviality did not end in a fight over some question of precedence or disputed statement. When such a combat did occur, it was usually a contest to the death. Nor were the fierce-tempered women passive during such encounters, but, as we have seen, were ready to aid the men of their family with frenzied attack. Such a feast as we have described presented a weird and picturesque sight under the flaming light of the torches made of rushes soaked in tallow.

One of the favorite domestic employments of the British women, though one which we may imagine fell largely to the lot of the younger women and the girls, was the making of the wickerware for which the ancient Britons were famous. Baskets, platters, the bodies of chariots, the frames of boats, and even the framework of the houses, were made of this light and serviceable material. Withes peeled and woven by the supple fingers of the young British women into fancy baskets found a ready market at Rome, and commanded high prices, being generally esteemed as a rare work of ingenious art. During the hours required to weave an article of this sort, the women

would fall into a responsive song, picked up perhaps from some passing minstrel.

Weaving, spinning, dyeing the fabrics thus made; the milking of the cattle, the grinding of the meal; the making of the garments for the family; the manufacture of pottery, to which may be added a share of the outdoor work, were some of the matters which made the life of the British woman far from an idle one. And yet, with it all, the young women found leisure to tarry at the spring for the exchange of laughing remarks, as they dropped something into its clear depth—as an offering to the divinity who they fully believed resided therein and who held in keeping their future and their fortunes—before they drew from it the water for the bleaching of the linen that they had already spread out in the sun.

The religion of the Britons, before the introduction of Christianity, was an elaborate system of superstitions and of nature worship. It was in the hands of a priestly order—the Druids. A mother was glad to resign her boy to the training of this mystical brotherhood, if he showed sufficient talent to warrant his reception therein. It is not necessary to describe particularly the system. It was made up of three orders, the Druids proper, the Bards, and the Ovates. Over the whole order was an Archdruid, who was elected for life. An order of Druidesses, also, is supposed to have existed. When Suetonius Paulinus landed at Anglesey in pursuit of the Druids (A. D. 56), women with hair streaming down their backs, dressed in black robes and with flaring torches in their hands, rushed up and down the heights, invoking curses on the invaders of their sacred precincts, greatly to the terror of the superstitious Roman soldiery.

At some of their sacred rites the women appeared naked, with their skin dyed a dark hue with vegetable stain. It

was the custom of the Druids, who had the oversight of public morals, to offer, as sacrifices to the gods, thieves, murderers, and other criminals, whom they condemned to be burned alive. Wickerwork receptacles, sometimes made in the form of images, were filled with the miserable wretches, and were then placed upon the pyre and consumed. The prophetic women, standing by, made divinations from the sinews, the flowing blood, or the quivering flesh of the victims. The defeat of the Druids and the felling of their sacred groves by the Romans gave the death blow to the system, which under the influence of Christianity completely disappeared.

The diffusion of Roman civilization colored the beliefs of the British women. The destruction of the native shrines whither they used to resort to make a propitiatory offering or to draw divinations for direction in some matter of personal or domestic concern, and the establishment of the fanes of Rome, which abounded throughout the country to the limits of the Roman conquest, converted the local deities into Roman divinities. Under new names, the old gods of the woods and streams continued to receive the homage of the Romanized British matrons and maidens.

But with the introduction of Christianity and its extension even into parts of the country where the sword of Rome had failed to penetrate, there was a more radical change wrought in the life of women. They have always instinctively recognized the fact that the Christian religion is their champion, and in its consolation the women of the Britons found much to alleviate their common distress and to elevate their status. In the trying hours that came with the inroads of the fierce and barbarous Teutons, when they were carried off by the savage Picts to a base servitude, and when, after the reassertion of the Christian religion among the English, the coming of the Danes next

brought a fresh abasement for their sex, the Christian faith was the sustaining and the reconstructive force of the lives of the women of the country. With the advance of Christianity passed the customs of pagan burial. The dead were no longer cremated, nor were they buried in the tumuli with the objects of their customary association interred with them to be of service in the spirit world.

One of the most apparent results of the Roman conquest, in its relation to the domestic life of the people, was the supersedence of the rude British dwellings by the Roman villa. This open style of house, suited to the sunny skies of Italy, had to undergo modifications to adapt it to the more rigorous clime of Britain. About an open court, which was either paved or planted in flower beds, the rooms were arranged, all of them opening inwardly, and some of them having an entrance to the outside as well. These connected rooms were usually one story high, with perhaps an additional story in the rear. The windows were iron-barred. The front of the villa was adorned with stucco and gaudily painted. In the homes of the wealthy, the inner court became an elaborately pillared banquet hall, with tessellated work in fine marble and with the pavement figured in symbolical devices. In it were placed the family shrines and statuary. Or else it was fitted up with the baths which were such a feature of Roman life. In later times, the walls blossomed out into decorations of mythological subjects: the foam-born Aphrodite, Bacchus and his panther steeds, Orpheus holding his dumb audience enthralled by his melody, Narcissus at the fountain, or the loves of Cupid and Psyche.

The heating arrangements of these houses were ample and convenient, and the edifices themselves were frequently added to by succeeding generations. In the country districts, the houses were provided with large

storerooms, plentifully supplied with provisions, and were garrisoned against the attack of enemies. The best of these Roman-British houses were imposing structures of vast dimensions. The women, when surrounded by the luxuries of Roman life, gave themselves over to pleasure and frequented the theatres and the public baths, and entertained in lavish style. They generally adopted the graceful Roman dress, and thus cleared themselves of the charge of loudness, extravagance, and meanness of attire that the earlier Roman writers brought against them. After the introduction of Christianity, when Roman civilization had become completely domesticated, it was no unusual thing for a Roman to have a British wife, or for British matrons to be found on the streets of Rome itself. The morals of the people were not proof against the contamination of Roman standards. The women, who were brought into closest touch with the Roman populace, imbibed their views and followed their example. Yet among the people who lived the simpler life of the country districts, and to whom Christianity most forcibly appealed, the standards of their race were largely maintained. The manner of life of the women of the wild northern tribes was, as we have seen, unaffected by the Roman occupancy of the country. Finding themselves unable to conquer these fierce people, the Romans, for their own security, had stretched across the country a great wall to facilitate defence; but they had soon to protect their coasts from other warlike races, who, first in piratical bands and then as migrating nations, brought terror and annihilation to the native Britons.

Chapter III

The Women of the Anglo-Saxons

III

THE WOMEN OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS

TO attempt a portrayal of the miseries entailed upon the women of the Britons by the forays of the barbarians, which followed the withdrawal of the Romans from the country, would be to rehearse the distresses which were but usual to warfare at that period of the world's history. We can pass over the savagery of human passions, inflamed by the heat of strife, and come to the more congenial and, indeed, the only important task of considering the life of woman, not under the exceptional conditions of war, but in the normal state of existence. Even during the Roman occupancy of the country, the British women had experienced the terrors of the barbarians. In spite of the massive wall, the lines of forts, and the system of trenches, by which that military people had sought to arrest the inroads of the Picts and Scots, those unconquered tribes of the north often swept with resistless force far into the peaceful provinces, bringing desolation into many homes and carrying off the women, to dispose of them in the slave markets of the continent.

More terrible still had been the descent upon the British coasts of the piratical Saxon rovers, whose frequent incursions had given to those tracts that were open to their attacks the significant appellation of the "Saxon shore." In spite of the measures of the Romans against these

marauding bands from over the seas, they were a source of continual terror, especially to the women of the coast settlements, to whom their name was a synonym of all those distresses which forcible capture and enslavement imply.

When the Roman forces withdrew, a danger that had been occasional and limited to localities now became a menace to the whole people. The invasions of the Picts and Scots became so frequent, and their ravages so dreadful, that the Britons, who for generations had been dependent upon the arms of the Romans for protection, felt unable to cope alone with the situation that faced them. In their extremity they hit upon the expedient of pitting barbarian against barbarian, hoping thus to gain peace from the northern terror, and at the same time to rid themselves of the menace of the pirates. To this end the astute sea rovers were engaged to discipline the northern hordes. But when these "men without a country" had fulfilled their obligation, they preferred to remain in the fertile and attractive island rather than return to their own vast forest stretches and there seek to combat the pressure that had set in motion the Germanic peoples.

In this way began, in the fifth century, the conquest of Britain by the Angles, the Jutes, and the Saxons: a conquest as inevitable as it was beneficial; a conquest so stern as practically to sweep from existence a whole people, excepting the women, who were spared to become the slaves of the conquerors, and such of the men as were needed to fill servile positions. The conquest of a Christian nation by a pagan one must have resulting justification of the highest order, if it is not to be stamped as one of the greatest calamities of history, and such justification is amply afforded by the splendid history of the English people. In the light of the achievements for

humanity that are presented by the record of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, we need not take up the lament of a Gildas over the woes of the Britons.

The impact of the virile peoples of northern Europe against the serried ranks of soldiery that circled the lines of the great world empire was the irresistible impulse of civilization to preserve and to further the march of the race toward the goal that mankind in all its wholesome periods has felt to be its unalterable destiny. The conquest of Britain was a part of this great world movement. Its striking difference as compared with the method and the results of the barbarian conquests on the continent lay in the fact that the new nationalities that there arose in the path of the invaders were Latin, while the England of Anglo-Saxon creation was essentially Teutonic. Hardly a vestige of the Roman occupancy of the country remains in language, in literature, in law, in custom, or in race.

The independence of the English people of Roman influence, and British as well, leads us to connect the customs, habits, and, in a word, the status and the civilization of their women, not with the antecedent line of British life, but with the tribes of the German forests. Some influence was exerted by the British women upon the life of the Anglo-Saxons, but it was not sufficient to become an influential factor in the crystallization of the new nation. Some of the surviving customs, manners, and superstitions of the English women are of undoubted British origin, and remain as a part of the folklore of the English race as we know it. There is no question that the life of the common people was tinctured by superstitious beliefs and magic, which even Christianity had failed completely to eradicate from the faith of the British women. And this is true, too, with matters of custom and, perhaps, of dress.

The status of the female sex among the Anglo-Saxons is well set forth by Sharon Turner in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons*. He says: "It is a well-known fact that the female sex were much more highly valued and more respectfully treated by the barbarous Gothic nations than by the more polished states of the East. Among the Anglo-Saxons they occupied the same important and independent rank in society which they now enjoy."

They were allowed to possess, to inherit, and to transmit landed property; they shared in all social festivities; they were present at the Witenagemot; they were permitted to sue and could be sued in the courts of justice; and their persons, their safety, their liberty, and their property were protected by express laws.

The dignity and the chastity of the women of the Germanic tribes made a profound impression on the minds of the Roman writers who had an opportunity for observing them, and evoked from them the warmest tributes. They remarked that the Germans were the only barbarians content with one wife. Here, then, we find that of which we have not been assured in our prior study of the women of Britain—genuine monogamous marriages.

Tacitus says: "A strict regard for the sanctity of the matrimonial state characterizes the Germans and deserves our highest applause. Among the females, virtue runs no hazard of being offended or destroyed by the outward objects presented to the senses, or of being corrupted by such social gayeties as might lead the mind astray. Severe punishments were ordered in case of infringement of this great bond of society. Vice is not made the subject of wit or mirth, nor can the fashion of the age be pleaded in excuse for being corrupt or for endeavoring to corrupt others. Good customs and manners avail more among these barbarians than good laws among a more refined people."

Among the Teutons, whom Tacitus thus praises to the discredit of his own people, there was no room for any question of the elemental rights of woman, for among them woman was more than loved, she was reverenced.

As Sharon Turner observes, women were admitted into the councils of the men; and the high position accorded them is further shown by their prominence in the more intellectual priestly class. The proportion of women to men must have been ten to one. Their preponderance in this influential order assured them of the preservation of the regard in which their sex was held. Its best security, however, lay in that instinctive feeling of the equality of the sexes which is fundamental in the character of the Anglo-Saxon and the Germanic family as a whole.

We must not suppose that because the women of the Anglo-Saxons had certain rights and were accorded a certain superstitious reverence, as specially gifted in divination, they were therefore the objects of chivalrous devotion and were surrounded by æsthetic associations. The age was a rude one, and the race was made up of uncouth barbarians. The female grace of chastity was not the result of high ideals, or of wise deductions from the sacredness of the family relation in its bearing upon society; it did not even have its basis in conspicuous moral motives; but it was a natural characteristic of a people who had lived under severe conditions which necessitated a constant struggle for supremacy and relegated all weaknesses of the flesh to a place of secondary importance. Had this attribute sprung from any of those considerations which at a later time gave rise to chivalry, there would be found in the poetry of the time the evidences of a tender regard for woman; her praise would have been sung in poems of love; but there is a dearth of love songs in the verses of this period. Love of a kind there was, but it was too

matter-of-fact and practical in its nature to effloresce into sentimentality.

As marriage is the basal principle of the true family, it will be proper to begin a consideration of the domestic relations of the women of the Anglo-Saxons by glancing at the circumstances, the significance, and the ceremonies of their marriages. When the Anglo-Saxons had settled in England, the primitive and barbarous custom of forcibly carrying off a bride had probably been superseded by the later form of obtaining a bride by purchase. While the woman seems to have had no choice in the selection of a husband, it is unreasonable to suppose that she did not hold and express opinions; nor would it be venturesome to assert that, despite her legal limitations, her voice in the matter of her marriage was often a decisive one. When the question was beset with especial difficulties, to what better umpire could a considerate parent refer the matter than to the bride herself?

One of the laws regulating the disposition of marriageable maidens was: "If one buys a maiden, let her be bought with the price, if it is a fair bargain; but if there is deceit, let him take her home again and get back the price he paid." This was a sort of marriage with warranty. But the law of Cnut took a more liberal view of the rights of the girl; it says: "Neither woman nor maid shall be forced to marry one who is disliked by her, nor shall she be sold for money, unless (the bridegroom) gives something of his own free will." By this law the woman was given the decision of her destiny, and the purchase price became a free gift. If a woman married below her rank, she was confronted by the alternatives of losing her freedom or giving up her husband. As the husband bought his wife, so he might sell her and their children, though this was rarely done. We need not, however, condemn too harshly

this absolute right that was vested in the head of a family in the disposition of its members, as it was but a relic of a usage common to all patriarchal societies, and which passed away with the clearer view of the sovereignty of self and the claims of society.

Before the marriage proper took place, there were held the ceremonies of espousal. These consisted of fixing the terms of the union, and entering upon agreements to be carried into effect after the ceremony. In later times, the first essential was the free consent of the persons to be espoused. This was a step toward the right of the female in the selection of a husband. Early espousals were customarily, but not invariably, dependent upon the consent of both parties. In some instances, the parents espoused their children when but seven years of age. On arriving at ten years of age, either of the parties could in theory terminate the engagement at will; but if they did so between the ages of ten and twelve, the parents of the one breaking the contract were liable to damages. Beyond twelve years, the child as well as its parents suffered the penalty.

After the parties to the espousal, in the presence of witnessing members of their respective families, had declared their free consent to the contract that was to bind them, the bridegroom promised to treat his betrothed well, "according to God's law and the custom of society." This declaration of a good purpose was ratified by his giving a "wed," or security, that he would creditably fulfil his intentions as expressed. The parents or guardians of the girl received these assurances in her behalf. The foster-lien was the next important matter. This was at first paid at the time of the espousal, until some fathers with attractive daughters found it to be a profitable investment to have them repeatedly espoused for the sake of

the foster-lien, but without any idea of consummating the espousal. This practice made these precontracts decidedly unpopular and led to their being modified by ecclesiastical law that provided for the payment of the foster-lien after marriage, in case it had been properly secured at the time of betrothal. When these preliminaries were arranged to the satisfaction of all concerned, the ceremony itself took place. This consisted of "handfasting" and the exchange of something, even if only a kiss, to bind the bargain. Frequently this sentimental interchange was accompanied on the part of the groom elect by the gift of an ox, a saddled horse, or other object of value.

This formal engagement was really a part of the marriage and was regarded as beginning the wedded life. The Church, however, favored an interval between the espousal and the marriage. The ceremony of betrothment usually took place in a church. If the man refused or neglected to complete the espousal within two years, he forfeited the amount of the foster-lien; if the woman were derelict in this respect, she was required to repay the foster-lien fourfold—later changed to twofold. It will be seen by this that "engagements" among the Anglo-Saxons presumed serious intentions, and that, in a breach of faith, the woman was held more rigidly to account than the man, whose fickleness was visited only by forfeiture of the security he had advanced. The woman was further required to return all the presents that she had received from her "intended."

The marriage ceremony was much like that of the espousal. The man and woman avowed publicly their acceptance of each other as wife and husband. The bridegroom was required to confirm with his pledge all that he had promised at the espousal, and his friends became responsible for his due performance. Though by

the customs of their times the young people were deprived of experiencing the delights and uncertainties of courtship, the girls were not to be denied the joys of a wedding; and when the circumstances of the groom permitted, the occasion was marked with gayety, music, feasting, and festivities of all sorts. The morning after the wedding, the husband, before they arose, presented to his wife the *morgen gift*. This was a valuable consideration, and corresponded to the modern marriage settlement. The terms of the settlement were arranged before the marriage, but the gift was not actually presented until the marriage had been consummated.

The rude conduct which accompanies a wedding in rough communities at the present day, as well as the more innocent but embarrassing pranks to which any newly wedded couple may be subjected, find their counterpart in the uncouth conduct and witticisms that were at one time a part of the experiences of an Anglo-Saxon bride and groom. As the bride, accompanied by her friends, was conducted to her future home, where her husband, according to custom, awaited her, the procession was sometimes saluted by facetious youths with volleys of filth and refuse of any sort, the especial target of their maliciousness being the frightened and insulted bride herself. If the young rowdies could succeed in spoiling her costume, they were especially satisfied with themselves. Aside from the indignity offered her, the loss of her costume was always a serious matter to the bride, as in that time of scanty wardrobes it represented a large part of her *trousseau*.

The bridegroom, if such indignities were offered to his spouse, invariably sallied forth with his friends to administer condign punishment to the "jokers"; and as all freemen in those days carried arms, bloodshed, bruises, and broken bones resulted. Later, the law took cognizance

of the outrage and suppressed it. But such unpleasant experiences were not permitted to spoil the marriage festivities; the bride received the felicitations of her friends and displayed her gifts—the latter being in evidence at all weddings, because the making of gifts on the part of relatives was not a thing of choice, but of compulsion.

Among the convivial Anglo-Saxons the marriage would have been considered a very tame affair without the accompanying excesses of unrestrained feasting, drinking, and mirth. The clergyman who had pronounced the benediction at the nuptials came to the feast with a company of his clerical friends. The wedding feast lasted for at least three days, and was a time of gluttony and rioting. On the first day, the festivities were opened by the clergy rising and singing a psalm or other religious song. The wandering gleemen, who were always present at these feasts, then took up the singing; and as they proceeded, to the clamorous approval of the drunken company, they became less and less mindful of the proprieties of sentiment and of action. The bride and groom were not obliged to remain to the end of the revelry, but might avail themselves of an opportunity to slip out from the hall. When the company was surfeited with festivities, the more sober of them formed a procession, with the clergy in the lead and with musical attendance conducted the bride and groom to the nuptial couch. The bed was formally blessed by the priest, the marriage cup was drunk by the bride and the groom, and then the couple were left by their friends, who returned to the hall and renewed their feasting. Even Alfred the Great, good and wise as he was, could not escape the customs of his times, and was compelled to indulge in such excesses at his wedding that he never quite recovered from an attack of illness he suffered in consequence.

Having noticed the rudeness to which the bride was subjected, it is gratifying to mention a more pleasant bit of waggery that was much in vogue, and that corresponds more nearly to the wedding pranks of to-day. One of the symbolic features of the wedding was the touching by the bridegroom of the forehead of the bride with one of his shoes. This signified that her father's right in her had passed to her husband. But when the couple were conducted to their nuptial couch by the bridal company, it was quite likely, if the bride had a reputation for shrewishness, that the shoe, which after the ceremony had been placed on the husband's side of the bed, would be found on the bride's side—a hint that the general conviction was that the headship of the family would be found to be vested in the wife. We can see from this that the custom of throwing an old shoe after a bride to give her "good luck" really signifies the wish that she may dominate the new establishment.

The marriage of a girl was signalized by her being thereafter allowed to bind her hair in folds about her head. Up to that time she wore her hair loose. This custom, which in earlier days signified a wife's subjection, came now to denote the high dignity to which she had been raised; her hair thus arranged was a crown of honor, and every girl looked eagerly forward to the time when she might wear a *volute,* as this style of hairdressing was called.

The very practical Anglo-Saxon marriage bargains do not partake much of the flavor of romance. We find other evidences of the mercenary motives that pervaded the marriage customs of the time. The idea of marriage as the purchase of a wife, who in that relation became the property of her husband, is further indicated by the fact that unfaithfulness might be condoned by a money payment, the *were.* An old law says: "If a freeman cohabit

with the wife of a freeman, he must pay the *were,* and obtain another woman with his own money and lead her to the other." Indeed, the chastity of women was regulated by a set price, according to their station. If the woman in the case were of the rank of an earl's wife, the culprit paid a fine of sixty shillings, and paid to the husband five shillings; if the woman were unfree or below age, he suffered imprisonment or mutilation. These citations from the laws of the time are not made to show regulations of morals, but to illustrate the fact that in the case of free women offences could be satisfied by a money payment, just as the husband in the first instance acquired his rights over his wife by such a payment.

Having considered with some detail the general regard in which women were held and the customs of marriage, it is now in place to say something about the methods of dissolving the matrimonial tie. It must be borne in mind that the period we are describing was one of rapid development. After the introduction of Christianity the uncouth barbarians rapidly became civilized, and new laws were constantly being made to define the rights of individuals in all relations. Thus, as marriage customs and incidents underwent modification, so did the circumstances of divorce. At first the husband could, at will, return his wife to her parents; his power of repudiation was practically unlimited. But such a condition could not long be brooked, as the practice was a serious affront to the lady's family. We read in the romance of Brut that Gwendoline and her friends not only levied war on King Locrine for repudiating her under the bewitchments of the beautiful Estrild, but put both the king and his new bride to death. When Coenwalch grievously insulted Penda, the king of the Mercians, by putting aside his wife, Penda's sister, that monarch at once declared war on the West Saxon king.

Such grave disorders were incited by this unjust right of the husband that, largely through the influence of the clergy, limitations were put upon the practice. Naturally, the first step was to require cause for the repudiation of a wife. The causes advanced were usually frivolous or insufficient; but when the bishops taught that "if a man repudiated his wife, he was not to marry another in her lifetime, if he wished to be a very good Christian," the custom became less prevalent, especially as the second wife was punished by excommunication. The right of repudiation for cause was exercised by wives as well as husbands. The case of Etheldrythe, the daughter of Anna, the famous King of East Anglia, as cited by Thrupp, will serve to illustrate the prevailing conditions of the wedded state. "This young lady had the misfortune to be very weak and very rich. She was consequently sought for as a wife, by princes who cared nothing for her person, and as a nun, by churchmen who cared as little for her soul. She endeavored to please all parties. She took a vow of virginity with permission to marry, and married with permission to observe her vow. Her first husband, Tondebert, Earl of Girvii, who probably obtained possession of her land, did not trouble himself about her or her personal property; and on his death, she retired to Ely. She subsequently married Egfried, a son of the King of Northumbria, a boy of about thirteen, whose friends desired her estate. He, also, for some time willingly respected her vow, but afterward attempted to compel her to do her duty as a wife. She refused compliance with his wishes, and, having succeeded in escaping from his kingdom, again took up her residence in a monastery. There, in defiance of her marriage vow, she emulated the strictest chastity of the cloister while in the bonds of marriage. The clergy applauded her conduct, and, no doubt, obtained possession

of her estates. The king took a second wife; and all parties appear to have been satisfied with what was, in truth, a very discreditable transaction."

After the decline of the right of repudiation, marriage could be annulled by mutual consent, and the parties were probably permitted to marry again. Legal divorces were granted for adultery, and what the clergy called spiritual adultery, which consisted of marriage to a godfather or a godmother or anyone who was of spiritual kindred, as such imagined relatives were called. To these causes for divorce were added idolatry, heresy, schism, heinous crimes, leprosy, and insanity. If either husband or wife were carried off into slavery, or otherwise became unfree, or were made a prisoner of war, the other had a right to remarry after a certain time.

To insure a decent interval between marriages, the law stipulated that if a widow entered again into wedlock within a year after the death of her former husband, she should sacrifice the *morgen gift* and all the property she had derived from him.

At first, the childless wife had no interest in her husband's property; at his death, the duty of caring for her reverted to her own family. If she had children, she was entitled to one-half of his estate, but this was in the nature of a provision for the children. But as society improved, the rights of widows came to be recognized. Women had from the earliest times been permitted to hold and bequeath property in their own right; the failure to recognize the widow's interest in her deceased husband's estate arose from her being regarded as having left her own family circle and identified herself with that of her husband for his life only; therefore, at his death she renewed her connection with her own family, who assumed the care of her. In the case of her children, they, being of his flesh and blood,

had a natural interest in their father's property, while the wife's relations with her husband were simply contractual. A more just view prevailed in the time of Cnut, as is shown by one of his laws, which provided that the widow not only had a right to her settled property, but, whether she had children or not, was entitled to one-third of whatever had been acquired jointly by her and her husband during their married life, "excepting his clothes and his bed." This law did not abrogate the provision already stated, that the widow forfeited everything in case she married within a year.

About the time of Cnut's laws giving wider rights to wives in the matter of property, there was passed a law that recognized the wife's right to exclusive control of her personal effects. Wardrobes had become much more extensive, and the law took the view that a woman had a right to a chest or closet of her own, wherein to keep her clothing, her jewelry and ornaments, and all the little articles dear to feminine fancy and personal to their possessor. To this private receptacle her husband could not have access without her leave. This curious law, making a real advance in woman's legal status, arose out of the predatory tendencies of the age.

When a child was born in an Anglo-Saxon household in the earliest days, the first thought was not, what shall it be named, but, shall it be put to death? In those rude times, the custom of exposure applied to the young and to the very old. Life was a continual hardship, and food was often extremely difficult to procure. Care for the feeble implies a solicitude for life that was foreign to the experiences of the men of that day. The weak and the sickly were regarded as superfluous members of society. If the infant were deformed, or not wanted for any reason, it was either killed outright, exposed, or sold into slavery.

We like to believe that when the Anglo-Saxons settled in Britain and found themselves under more comfortable conditions of living than those to which they had been accustomed in the inhospitable clime whence they came, with its constant threat of famine, they discarded this dreadful practice; but customs die slowly, and, as the parent had absolute rights in the person of his child, sentiment against the practice required time to become general. The rugged Teuton, teeming with an overflowing vitality, had not adopted the modern method of birth restriction as a solution of the problem of sustenance. There was no Malthus in the forests of Germany to discourse on the economic effect of an overplus of population and to awaken inquiry as to the best way to limit the human family within the bounds of possible sustenance. It was a condition and not a theory that faced the Teuton, and he met the situation in the only way known to him. As the problem passed away, the practice went also, though isolated cases of exposure of infants continued down to the tenth century.

In the form of exposing children of clouded birth, the practice of infanticide grew with the lowering of morals; but in the case of legitimate offspring the custom declined. The Church imposed heavy penalties on those found guilty of the practice. Fortunately for the infants so treated, there was a prevailing superstition that to adopt one of these foundlings brought good luck. The great prevalence of the crime at some periods is shown by the rewards offered by the different monarchs to those who would adopt foundlings. All rights in the child passed to the one who adopted it. The general willingness to adopt such children led to many abuses. Mothers thus relieved themselves of the duty of caring for their offspring, while those to whom the children were committed often looked upon them as so many units of labor, and made life very

hard for them. Homicide was frequently one of the effects of the baleful practice, and generally occurred under conditions that made it difficult to fix the guilt.

It is interesting to note, as Gummere points out, that the barbaric custom of exposing infants "lies at the foundation of the most exquisite myths—Lohengrin the swan-knight, Arthur the forest foundling, and that mystic child who in the prelude of our national epic, *Beowulf,* drifts in his boat, a child of destiny, to the shores of a kingless land."

Grimm quotes from a Danish ballad, where a mother puts her babe in a chest, lays with it consecrated salt and candles, and goes to the waterside:

> "Thither she goes along the strand
> And pushes the chest so far from land,
> Casts the chest so far from shore:
> 'To Christ the Mighty I give thee o'er;
> To the mighty Christ I surrender thee,
> For thou hast no longer a mother in me.'"

The custom of exposing illegitimate offspring shows a retrogression from the standards of rugged chastity which were characteristic of the earlier period of the Anglo-Saxon settlement in Britain. In those times, as we have seen, the German women were models of virtue; the slightest departure from morality was viewed with horror and visited with severe punishment. If the one guilty of misconduct were married, she was shorn of her hair, the greatest degradation to which she could be subjected, and then driven naked from her husband's house, her own relatives giving their countenance and aid to the husband in thus banishing her. She was expelled from the village, and not allowed to return. At a later date, such a woman, married or unmarried, was made to strangle herself with her own hands; her refusal to do so availed nothing, as the

women of the neighborhood stripped off her garments to the waist, and then with knives, whips, and stones hunted her from village to village until death mercifully relieved her from further torture.

In spite of such harsh penalties, the moral standard could not be maintained at a high level. It is more than likely that its decline was due in part to the women whom the Northmen brought with them. When they touched the shores of Britain, it was often after piratical voyages that had taken them to the coasts of France, Spain, Italy, and even Africa. When this was the case, they were always accompanied by large numbers of female slaves from these countries. Then, too, the greater part of the British women were reduced to slavery by the new masters of the country, and none of these were treated with the consideration for their sex that was accorded the German women. The repute of the women of the Anglo-Saxons remained unimpaired, excepting as to particular classes and particular times; the women not of Anglo-Saxon origin were, perforce, the chief offenders against morality.

The era of the Danish invasion was a time of almost unbridled license. Female character could not withstand the tide of immorality that came in with the new wave of heathen invaders. The women whom the Vikings brought with them were captives of the lowest grade, ravished from their homes for the pleasure of their captors on their long sea voyage. On their arrival they were made slaves of the camp, following the army wearily in its marches from place to place. This miserable degradation was forced upon many pure English women by the brutal lords of the sea. When the invaders settled down to live at peace with the English, and, by amalgamation, to be absorbed into the larger race, it was centuries before the

country recovered from the blight of immorality that had fallen upon it; but, with its rare powers of recuperation, Anglo-Saxon virtue reasserted its principles and caused its conquerors to subscribe to them.

Before considering the dress, the amusements, and the employments of the women, a description of the Anglo-Saxon house will serve to illustrate much of the common life of the women. This was not evolved from that of the Briton; it marks a departure in the architecture of the country. Neither the rude houses of the poorer of the Britons nor the villa of the Roman provincial appealed to the forest nomads, who were accustomed to light, tentlike structures that could be readily taken down and erected elsewhere as their changing habitat directed.

The Anglo-Saxon town of the earliest period was only a cluster of wooden houses—a family centre constantly added to by the increase and dividing of the household, until the settlement assumed something of the proportions of a town. Stone was not in favor with the Teutons for their dwellings. They saw in it the relic of the demigods of a remote past; stone masonry seemed supernatural, and they called it "the giants' ancient work." The house of the Teutons was probably a development of the ancient burrow; as Heyn expresses the process of its evolution: "Little by little rose the roof of turf, and the cavern under the house served at last only for winter and the abode of the women." The summer house of wattles, twigs and branches, bound together by cords, and with a thatched roof, a rough door, and no windows, seemed to serve these unsettled people, whose surroundings abounded with the materials for substantial edifices.

The architecture of the Germans developed rapidly. Soon there was a substantial hall, or main house, which was the place of gathering and feasting and the sleeping

place of the men. The women slept, and we may say dwelt, in the bower. Necessary outbuildings were supplied in abundance. The floor of the hall was of hard earth or of clay, perhaps particolored, and forming patterns of rude mosaic. It was no uncommon thing for the rough warrior to ride into the hall, and to stable there his beloved steed, as will be seen from the following extract from an English ballad of a later date, which is given us by Professor Child:

> "Kyng Estmere he stabled his steede
> Soe fayre att the hall-bord;
> The froth that came from his brydle bitte
> Light in Kyng Bremor's beard."

Rows of benches were commonly placed outside of the hall; the exterior walls and the roof were painted in striking colors. Huge antlers fringed the gables; the windows, lacking glass, were placed high up in the wall, and a hole in the roof sufficed for the escape of smoke.

Such was the early English hall, as it appears to us in the ballads and stories of the times. The magnificent lace and embroidered hangings with which were draped the interior walls of the habitations of the nobility served the double purpose of decoration and protection from the cold draughts that came in through the numerous crevices. Even the royal palace of Alfred was so draughty that the candles in the rooms had to be protected by lanterns. Benches and seats with fine coverings added comfort and elegance to the hall. In front of these were placed stools, with richly embroidered coverings, for the feet of the great ladies. The tables in these Anglo-Saxon homes were often of great beauty and costliness. In the reign of King Edgar, Earl Aethelwold possessed a table of silver that was worth three hundred pounds sterling. Many sorts

of candelabra, some of them of exquisite pattern and workmanship, made of the precious metals and set with jewels, were used to impart to these old halls the dim light that in our fancy of the times becomes a feature of the romance of the knightly homes of older England.

Warm baths were essential to the comfort of the Anglo-Saxon; to be deprived of them and of a soft bed was one of the severe penances imposed by the Church. The ladies' bower was perfumed with the scents and spices of India and the East.

Though the houses still left much to be desired in the way of architectural features as well as ordinary convenience, the appointments and furnishings of a home of the later Anglo-Saxon period showed a keen appreciation of creature comforts.

The law of hospitality opened all doors to the wayfaring freeman. When he wound his horn in the forest as he approached the hall to protect himself from being set upon as a marauder, he was welcomed to the warm fire, the loaded table, and the guest bed, without question. In later times, the traveller was permitted to remain to the third night. The guest who came hungry, weary, and dusty to one of these hospitable homes and received admittance might esteem himself fortunate, for the women of the time were well versed in the art of wholesome cookery, and had at hand a plentiful variety of foods. For their meats they might select from the choice cuts of venison, beef, and lamb, besides pork, chicken, goat, and hare. Birds and fish afforded greater variety. Of the latter there were salmon, herring, sturgeons, flounders, and eels; and of shellfish, crabs, lobsters, and oysters. Horse flesh was in early use as a comestible, but later became repugnant to taste, and was discountenanced by the Church in the latter part of the eighth century.

To the meats was added a variety of warm breads, made of barley meal and of flour. Eggs, butter, cheese, and curds, with many sorts of vegetables, were to be found on the tables; while figs, nuts, almonds, pears, and apples were probably served by the women to the company as they sat in discourse about the fire, or, stretched at full length upon the floor, became absorbed in games of chance. For the Germans were such inveterate gamblers that money, goods, chattels, their wives, and even their own liberty, were often risked by the casting of dice.

The women were admitted to seats at the tables with the men, the girls being engaged in serving the drinks, which were as freely used then as now. Even after the company were surfeited with food and the tables were removed, drinking was kept up until the evening.

The costumes of a people are of the greatest worth in revealing to the student their grade of civilization and their ideals. There can be no question but that taste in dress is one of the best gauges by which to determine whether at a particular time the people were serious-minded or frivolous, moral or immoral, swayed by high aspirations or the prey of indolence and sensuous gratifications. Just as truly can we arrive at the characteristics of a race or a period by seeing the people at their play. If we find them given to gladiatorial exhibitions, we shall not err in concluding that they were a vigorous and warlike people; if they are found at the bull fight, we may safely adjudge them to be a brutalized and enervated race. The Anglo-Saxon can safely be brought to this test. If the dress of the women is a criterion of morals, then were these people of early England exemplary; if the games in vogue denote the race characteristics, then were these rude, but wholesome.

After the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, there were evidently some changes made in their garb, to indicate their abjuration of heathenism; for in the Church council of 785 the complaint was made that "you put on your garments in the manner of the pagans, whom your fathers expelled from the world; an astonishing thing, that you should imitate those whose life you always hated." Change of style in dress was practically unknown among the ladies of the Anglo-Saxon period of English history. The illuminations of the old MSS., from which all that is definitely known on the subject is derived, show that the dress of the women remained practically the same during the entire period.

The costume of the women can be described with many details. There was an undergarment, probably made of linen, extending to the feet; it had sleeves that reached to the wrists and were there gathered tightly in little plaits. There was an absence of needlework of any sort, excepting a simple bit of embroidery upon the shoulder. The customary color of the garment was white. Over this was worn the gown, which was slightly longer than the undergarment, and reached quite to the ground. It was bound about the waist by a girdle, by which it was sometimes caught up and shortened. The sleeves are most frequently pictured as extending to the wrist, and were worn full. Sometimes, however, they reached to only the elbow, and in some cases were wanting altogether. This garment was prettily ornamented with embroidery, in simple bands of sprigs, diverging from a centre. Another form of dress that is represented seems to have been an out-of-doors or travelling costume. It differed from the other in being of heavier material, possibly of fine woollen goods, and had sleeves that extended to the knees. It is possible that this was a winter dress, and the other a summer one.

A mantle was worn about the shoulders. This, likewise, was of a solid color, usually contrasting with that of the gown. This garment appears to have been round or oval in shape, with an aperture at one side, so that when it was put on it hung much further down the back than in front. The head was covered with a wimple, broad enough to reach from the top of the forehead to the shoulders, where it was generally wrapped about the neck in such a way that the ends fell on the bosom. A less studied, but more tasteful, way to wear it was to have it hang down on one side as far as the knee; the effect of the contrasting colors of the wimple, the mantle, and the gown was gratifying to women of taste. The shoes were black, and of simple style. They resembled the house slippers worn by women to-day; but besides these low shoes, which came only to the ankles, other shoes were worn, that reached higher up the leg and appeared to have been laced much as shoes now are. Stockings may or may not have been used.

It will be seen from this description of the costume of the Anglo-Saxon woman that it was modest, complete, and in good taste. She was, however, proud of her attire, and of the many ornaments that were worn with it. The ornament in most general use was the fibula, or brooch. This was of many styles: radiated, bird-shaped, cruciform, square-shaped, annular, and circular. It was of gold, bronze, or iron, and showed the greatest delicacy of workmanship. It was worn on the breast, a little to one side, so as to fasten the mantle. When we are reminded that the Anglo-Saxons were highly skilled in the art of dyeing, and that they had perfected the art of gilding leather, we can readily see that a lady of quality, when dressed in her blue, purple, or crimson costume of state, her girdle clasped by a finely chased brooch of gold, whose fellow gleamed

in the folds of her mantle, might have invited comparison, to advantage, with the most stylishly attired woman of to-day. But when we add to her dress a mantle, not only of rich colors, but embroidered in ornate design, with heavy threads of pure gold; massive arm rings of the same precious metal, of wonderfully beautiful pattern, and fastened about her round white arm by delicate little chains; and numerous strings of gold, amber, and glass beads, rich in pattern and cunningly chased, the picture presented of the Anglo-Saxon woman is altogether pleasing. The ornaments of the women were not considered as mere matters of adornment. To the pagan woman, her beads served as a protection against supernatural foes. When Christianity came in, the beads were blessed by a pious man and continued to serve the same useful end.

The bronze combs found everywhere in the graves of the time show how careful the women of the day were to keep in perfect order the long locks of which they were so proud. From the graves have been recovered chatelaines, of the fashion of those now in vogue, golden toothpicks, ear spoons, and tweezers. These ornaments and toilet requisites were in constant use in life; and in pagan times they were interred with their owner, that they might still be hers in the other world.

The Anglo-Saxons understood the art of inlaying enamel, and their colors were remarkably bright and enduring. But the most striking evidence of proficiency in the jeweller's art was their *cloisonné* ware. This art of the East was spread by the barbarian invasions over the whole of Europe; De Baye, in his *Industrial Arts of the Anglo-Saxons,* calls it "the first æsthetic expression of the Gothic nations," and says that it was not borrowed, but was adapted from the East. He describes it as follows: "This *cloisonné* work, set with precious stones in a kind

of mosaic, and combined at times with the most delicate filigree, is sufficiently characteristic to be remarkable in every country where it has left traces." This beautiful form of art penetrated Kent and the Isle of Wight, where for some reason it became localized and assumed a particular character. Some of the fibulæ that have been preserved to us, and are to be found in the art collections of England, are remarkable specimens of this beautiful craft.

The love of English women for outdoor sports can be traced to Anglo-Saxon times, and much of the wholesome vigor of the race is due to those early pastimes. However fond women may have been of fine ornaments, then as now it was the privilege of the few to possess them; but the national sports were enjoyed by all. Hunting, hawking, boating, swimming, fishing, skating, were in great favor with the people.

In the winter there were many long hours to be whiled away indoors, and although spinning and weaving the fabrics for the family wear, as well as their embroidery and lace work, took up much of the time, the women still had ample leisure to engage with the members of their households and, perhaps, the passing guests in the many simple games that delighted them. Chess was in marked favor, and was played in much the same manner as now. The exchange of witticisms and the guessing of conundrums added much to the innocent mirth of a household intent on making the long evenings pass as pleasantly as possible.

There were itinerant purveyors of amusement who were to be found at every feast and at many family firesides. These were the wandering minstrels, or gleemen. Although they were welcomed for the entertainment they furnished, yet as a social class they were certainly in slight repute. Their forms of entertainment were not limited to music.

They presented a programme that included the performances of trained animals, tricks of jugglery, feats of magic, and other exhibitions of skill and daring. Along with the gleemen went the glee maidens, who were the dancing and acrobatic girls of the day. Dancing itself was a very rudimentary performance, but the enthusiasm of the audience was aroused by the acts of tumbling and contortion that were introduced into it. Convinced that dancing alone could not account for the bewitchment of Herod by the daughter of his brother Philip's wife, the translators into the vernacular of that Biblical circumstance say of Herodias that she "tumbled" before Herod; and the illuminations in a prayerbook of the time show Herodias in the act of tumbling, with the assistance of a female attendant.

Slight protection, either from law or custom, was afforded women of the lower classes from gross insults. Any female was likely to be stopped on the road and partially or altogether denuded of her clothing, and then sent on her way with taunts and jeers. But, despite the coarseness of the Anglo-Saxon times, sentiment finally made itself felt for the correction of such manners. The women were responsible for the diffusion of notions of greater refinement.

While there was little deserving the name of education, and even reading and writing were the accomplishments of but a small part of the people, the monastic orders conserved some notion of scholarship. Unfavorable as were the times to productive thought, scholars of no mean ability nevertheless flourished, and among men and women alike there was a desire for learning. To his female scholars the monk Anghelm dedicated his works: *De Laude Virginitatis*. Certain Saxon ladies of leisure occupied themselves with the study of Latin, which they came to read and write with some ease. The literary antecedents

of the brilliant women of the sixteenth century are to be found in that little group of studious women of the Anglo-Saxons, of whom the Abbess Eadburga and her pupil Leobgitha, with both of whom Saint Boniface corresponded in Latin, were the most notable.

The nuns were a class apart. The separation of the monks and the nuns in the monastic establishments was gradually brought about by Church regulations and the rules of the orders. By the end of the seventh century the separate monasteries had effected the separation of the men and the women, and in the eighth century the erection of double monasteries was forbidden. Long before this time, however, the more earnest of the ladies in superintendence of the monasteries had prohibited the admission of men to the female side of the establishments, excepting such men as the sainted Cuthbert and the venerable Bede. These regulations were very strict and almost put an end to the scandalous allegations about the religious establishments. The charge that the priests resorted to the monasteries for mistresses probably had no better foundation than the fact that many of the priests continued to marry, in spite of the rule of celibacy. Whatever truth there is in the assertion that kings obtained their mistresses from the ranks of the nuns must be laid to the civil interference and claims of jurisdiction over religious institutions. But while the headship of convents was frequently offered to women of high rank and low morals, whom it was convenient thus to get rid of, and in this way certain institutions became debauched, the monastic system itself did not become corrupt, and there were monasteries of notable purity and great worth.

The story of Eadburga, the widow of Beorthric, King of Kent, illustrates the hardships inflicted upon the monasteries, through the assumption of royal personages to

appoint their heads. Eadburga was a notable beauty, and was renowned as well for her talents and her ambition. She ruled her husband with a jealous tyranny, removing from court by false accusation or by poisoning all who stood in her path. The Earl Worr, a young man of great personal charm, was one of those who exerted an influence over her husband. On some occasion of public hospitality she proffered him a cup of poisoned liquor; the king, who was present, claimed his right of precedence, and, after drinking from the cup, passed it to the earl, who drained it. Both of them died, leaving the guilty queen exposed to the wrath of the royal family. Eadburga fled to the court of Charlemagne, where she was graciously received, and after a time the king suggested to her that she lay aside her widow's weeds and become his wife. She showed so little tact as to say that she would prefer his son. Charlemagne, piqued by her answer, said that had she expressed a preference for him, it had been his purpose to give her in marriage to his son; as it was, she should marry neither of them. She remained at the court until the king, scandalized by her wicked life, placed her at the head of an excellent monastery. In this responsible position, Eadburga behaved herself as badly as ever; and as the result of an amour with a countryman of low birth, she was expelled from the convent. This widow of a monarch ended her career as a common beggar in the streets of Pavia.

A very different class from the nuns, but, like them, a distinct class in the social life of Anglo-Saxon times, were the slaves. The least amiable trait of the women of the times was their treatment of servants. Although there were striking instances of kindly and considerate regard for this class on the part of their mistresses, yet the slight legal protection afforded them, and the rough,

impetuous natures of the masters, made the existence of the servile class miserable. It was not unusual for slaves to be scourged to death; and for comparatively slight offences they were loaded with gyves and fetters and subjected to all kinds of tortures. On one occasion, the maidservant of a bellmaker of Winchester was, for a slight offence, fettered and hung up by the hands and feet all night. The next morning, after being frightfully beaten, she was again put in fetters. The following night, she contrived to free herself, and fled for sanctuary to the tomb of Saint Swithin. This was not an exceptional instance; it illustrates the severity that was customarily meted out to serfs.

The queens and other ladies of rank among the Anglo-Saxons included some who were ornaments to the sex in industry and intelligence as well as charity. Their influence on politics for good or for evil was often the result of their position as members of rival houses. Christianity was often furthered by the alliance of a Christian princess to a pagan king; Bertha, the daughter of a famous Frankish king, was in this way instrumental in the introduction of Christianity into England. Herself a Christian, she married Ethelbert, King of Kent, on condition that she should be permitted to worship as a Christian under the guidance of a Frankish bishop named Lindhard. The condition was observed, and Bertha had her Frankish chaplain with her at court. She seems not to have made any attempt to convert her husband; and he never disturbed her in her religion. The pope was probably informed of the auspiciousness of the outlook for the introduction of Christianity into the Kentish kingdom, and, being still under the influence of the impression made upon him by the flaxen-haired Angles he had seen in the slave markets of Rome before his elevation to the pontificate, he determined to make good

the vow he had then registered to send missionaries to the land of the boy slaves. Augustine was selected for the mission, and on arriving, with his companions, in England, after a great deal of trepidation for their personal safety, they presented themselves at the court of the King of Kent. Ethelbert received them in the open air, with a great show of pomp, and gave them his promise to interpose no hindrance to their missionary endeavors among his people. To Bertha must be ascribed the credit for the complaisance of her husband and the opening that was made to restore the Christian faith, which had perished with the Britons.

Edith, the gentle queen of Edward the Confessor, was noted alike for her skill with the needle and her conversance with literature. Ingulf's *History,* though perhaps not authentic, gives us a delightful picture of the simplicity of her Anglo-Saxon court. "I often met her," says this writer,—meaning Edith,—"as I came from school, and then she questioned me about my studies and my verses; and willingly passing from grammar to logic, she would catch me in the subtleties of argument. She always gave me two or three pieces of money, which were counted to me by her hand-maiden, and then sent me to the royal larder to refresh myself."

Ethelwyn, another royal lady, and a friend of Archbishop Dunstan, was accustomed to decorate the ecclesiastical vestments, and the art needlework of herself and her companions became celebrated. On account of his well-known skill in drawing and designing, Dunstan was frequently called into the ladies' bower to give his views in such matters. While they worked, he sometimes regaled them with music from his harp.

These pleasing views of the character and the employments of the royal ladies in Anglo-Saxon times, seen in their simple pursuits, are more agreeable than the stories

of those who were engaged in court intrigues, to relate which would necessitate a history of the political movements of the day. We shall later have ample opportunity to see woman as an influence in affairs of thrones and dynasties. For the present, it will suffice to regard royal woman in the way in which she is prominently presented to us in Anglo-Saxon annals—as the lady of refined domesticity.

Chapter IV

The Women of the Anglo-Normans

IV

THE WOMEN OF THE ANGLO-NORMANS

A PICTURE of the social life of England during the Norman period is a picture of manners and customs in a state of flux. But amid all the instability of the times, when political institutions, laws, customs, and language were inchoate, the tendencies were so marked that it is quite possible to watch the emergence of a solidified people. The two great social factors to be considered are the baronial castles and the women of those castles. The castle was the characteristic feature of the Anglo-Norman period; its conspicuousness increased as time went on, until, in the reign of Stephen, there were no less than eleven hundred of these units of divided sovereignty scattered over the country.

During the period of national unsettlement which followed upon the Conquest, these frowning castles arose; they owed their existence to the lack of adequate laws for the safeguarding of life and of property, and to the absence of the machinery of government for the enforcement of law. But, principally, they represented the mutual jealousies of the Norman barons, to whom had been apportioned the lands of the Saxons—jealousies which found a common attraction in an aversion to the centralizing of power in the hands of any monarch who had ambitions to be more than a superior overlord.

This social insecurity was intensified during the reign of William by the danger of attack from the implacable Saxon bands of warriors who had retired into the swamps and from those fastnesses conducted a fierce guerrilla warfare upon the Normans. So full of danger was the period, that the closing of the castle for the evening was always an occasion for serious prayer and commitment of the inmates to Divine protection, as there was no knowing but that before morning a besieging force might appear before the gates and institute all the horrors of attack and beleaguerment.

The elevation of woman to the plane of companionship with her husband was largely due to the peculiar conditions of the feudal state of society, of which the frowning castle that crowned the many hilltops was the sinister characteristic. Exposed as she was to the same dangers, and sharing the responsibilities of her husband, there was no room for a distinction of status to be drawn between them. By reason of environment, wifely equality with her husband was not a matter of theoretical but simply of practical settlement. It was needful that the wife should be a woman of courage and of resources. But while the matter of sex did not constitute a badge of inferiority in the home relations, the peculiar perils to which the women were exposed constituted an appeal to manhood that evoked a chivalrous response; and when life became less hard and there was better opportunity for the expression of the tenderer sentiments, this especial regard for woman rose to the height of an exalted devotion.

It would not be right to assume, however, that the greater prominence and influence of woman outside of her home was a sudden emergence from former conditions. In so unsettled an era it became, however, a more general, more pronounced feature. We may find an earlier indication of the interest of the great lady in the affairs of her lord and

in the welfare of his dependants, as well as of the advance of chivalrous sentiments, in the story of Lady Godiva. It was in 1040 that Leofric, Earl of Mercia, was besought by his wife, who was remarkable for her beauty and piety, to relieve his tenantry of Coventry of a heavy toll. Probably little inclined to grant her request, he imposed what he may have thought impossible terms, when he consented to her plea on condition that she would ride naked through the town. To his amazement, doubtless, the Lady Godiva accepted the condition; and Leofric faithfully carried out his agreement. The lady, veiled only by her lovely hair, rode through the streets; and to the honor of the good people of Coventry, it is said that they kept within doors and would not look upon their benefactress to embarrass her. One person only is said to have peeped from behind the curtain of his window, and the story runs that he was struck blind, or, according to another version, had his eyes put out by the wrathful people. This curious person was the "Peeping Tom of Coventry," whose name has become proverbial.

Society develops in strata, so that the elevation of the women of the castles did not enable the women of the hovels to profit by conditions out of the range of their lives. The lower classes, or villains, which included the grades of society styled, in the Anglo-Saxon period, the freemen and the serfs, were the social antitheses of the society of the castles. The women of the lower class benefited not at all by the new dignity that was acquired by the women of the castles during the feudal régime; in fact, they suffered the imposition of new burdens and the exactions of a feudal practice which took the form of tribute, based on the persistent idea of the vassalage of their sex. The great middle class, which was to play such an important part in the social and industrial history of England, had not emerged

as a separate section of the people of the country. But what the lady of the Norman castle obtained for her class through one phase of feudalism, the woman of the guild aided in securing by another in the centuries which marked the rule of the Angevin kings; and in both Norman and Angevin times the influence of the Church was constantly on the side of the womanhood of the country, and was probably a more potent force than any other, for the exaltation of woman was the one policy which proceeded on fixed principles.

The castles too often degenerated into centres of rapine and pillage; perpetual feuds led to constant forays, and no traveller could be assured that he would not be set upon by one of these robber barons and his band of retainers—little better than remorseless banditti. But there were castles of a better sort, nor were all knights recreant to their vows. In assuming the obligations of his order, the newly vested knight swore to defend the Church against attack by the perfidious; venerate the priesthood; repel the injustices of the poor; keep the country quiet; shed his blood, and if necessary lose his life, for his brethren. Nothing was said in the oath about devotion to women, nor was such a thing at first contemplated as a part of the knight's office. His office was a military one, and sentiment did not enter into it. The chivalrous feature grew out of the circumstances of the times—the unprotected situation of woman, the fact that the knight who enlisted in the service of a baron, and the baron as well, often had to leave the women of their households dependent for protection upon the opportune courtesy of other knights and lords. When the country had become more orderly and manners had softened, with the increased security given to life and property and the better means of obtaining justice, this chivalrous feature continued and became prominent in the knightly character and office.

In the early times, when the life of the knight was of the roughest, there were adventurous young women, caught by the excitement it offered, who donned the habiliments of the knight and plunged into the dangers of his career. The story is told of the quarrel of two Norman ladies, Eliosa and Isabella, both of them high-strung, loquacious, and beautiful, and both dominating their husbands by the forcefulness of their natures. But while Eliosa was crafty and effected her ends by scheming, Isabella was generous, courageous, sunny-tempered, merry, and convivial. Each gathered about her a band of knights and made war upon her adversary. Isabella led her knights in person, and, armed as they were and as adept in the use of her weapons, she advanced in open attack upon her foe. Such incidents, though not usual, were yet in accord with the spirit of the time.

Every lady was trained in the use of arms for the needs of her own protection when the occasion should arise. Sometimes the practice of sword drill was carried on in the privacy of the lady's apartment. Thus, it is related of the Lady Beatrix—who, by reason of her expertness and her intrepidity in the actual use of arms, gained for herself the sobriquet *La belle Cavalier*—that the first knowledge that her brother had of her martial proclivities was when, through a crevice in the wall, he happened to observe her throw off her robe, and, taking his sword out of its scabbard, toss it up into the air and, catching it with dexterity, go through all the drill of a knight with spirit and precision; wheeling from right to left, advancing, retreating, feinting, and parrying, until she at last disarmed her imaginary foe. We read of the Knight of Kenilworth that he made a round table of one hundred knights and ladies, to which came, for exercise in arms, persons from different parts of the land.

In such setting is found the life of the woman of the day. But below whatever of chivalry was to be found in this turbulent age, which extended from the coming of William the Conqueror to the end of the reign of Stephen, it was preëminently a rude, boisterous, and uncultured era. The lack of uniformity of language was as much opposed to the development of literature as was the general unsettled condition of the times. Education, slight as it was, had suffered a relapse, and it was not until the twelfth century that anything like real literature was developed.

As the castle was the characteristic feature of the time, and within its walls will be found much of the matters of interest relating to the women of the day, a description of one of these domestic fortresses will make clearer the customs of the times in so far as they relate to the women of the higher classes.

The site selected for the ancient castle was always a hilltop or knoll that lent itself to ready defence. The foot of the hill was enclosed by a palisade and a moat; these circumvallations frequently rendered successful assault impossible, and the only recourse open to the attacking force was a protracted siege. As the stranger on peaceful mission bent approached one of these massive structures, rearing its frowning walls in silhouette against the blue of the sky, he could not fail to be impressed with the majesty and grandeur of its walls and turrets. He would notice the round-headed windows, with their lattice of iron and the numerous slitlike openings which supplemented the windows for the access of light and, as loopholes, played an important part in the defence of the fortress. On coming to the gateway, flanked on either side by bastions, pierced to admit of the flight of arrows, the warden would open to him, and he would be conducted into a courtyard,

whose sides were made by the walls of the hall, the chapel, the stable, and the offices. Within the courtyard, he would observe a garden of herbs and edible roots, and also a fine display of flowers; perhaps, too, a small enclosure in the nature of a cage, containing a number of animals—the trained animal collection of the jongleurs, who commonly attached themselves to the following of barons.

On passing into the hall, he would be at once struck by its absolute meagreness; a few stools, some seats in the alcoves of the wall, a few forms, some cushions and a sideboard, making its complement of furniture. The abundance and beauty of the plate on the sideboard might partially redeem in his eyes the barrenness of the place. The minstrel's gallery in the rear of the hall would be suggestive of the convivial uses of that portion of the castle. No elaborate draperies would be seen; some strips of dyed canvas upon the walls alone served to make up for the lack of plaster, and to afford some protection from damp and the spiders whose webs could be seen in the ceiling corners. On passing out again into the courtyard, he would observe the tokens of domestic pursuits in the kitchen utensils and the dairy vessels upon benches, and cloths hung upon poles above. Passing by the subsidiary buildings, and ascending to the ladies' bower by the outside staircase, he would find a few more evidences of comfort than greeted him in the hall below. Instead of common canvas, the walls would be draped with some embroidered materials, cushions would be more plentiful, the touches of femininity would be observed in various little elements of comfort and adornment; but, with all this, he would find it dreary enough. Should he return, however, to this boudoir when the ladies were gathered for their afternoon's sewing, the scene would make up in animation

what it lacked in attractiveness of surroundings. On going into the bedchamber, a glance would reveal its contents. Seats in the wall, a stool, a curiously shaped bed, candelabra, and two projecting poles, the one for falcons and the other for clothes, would complete the sum of its furniture. The bed furnishings would consist of a drapery, pendent from an odd roof, rather than a canopy, over the bed. The bed would look to him comfortable enough, with its quilted feathers and pillow attached, and, over these, sheets of silk or of linen, and over all a coverlet of haircloth, or of woollen fabric, lined with skins. One compartmented bed fixture, with its curious divisions, was thought to afford sufficient privacy for honored guests of different sexes, who were all cared for in the same chamber; if the number of the guests and of the household was large, several bed fixtures or bedsteads might be observed. The servants slept indiscriminately in the hall below.

Such was the simplicity of the interior arrangements and furnishings of the castle. But within these rooms, devoid of many of the ordinary comforts of modern life and altogether lacking in its luxuries, assembled women who prided themselves on their noble estate and extraction; here, too, were held many assemblies of state; kings in their progresses through their kingdom tarried for entertainment, bringing with them magnificent retinues. Feasts and social functions called forth all the highbred graces of the fair hostess and made the castle a scene of merriment and of joyous conviviality. Here, too, were held orgies of drunkenness and of depravity; intrigues smouldered within these walls, to break out into an open flame of rebellion; while dramas of noble self-abnegation and plightings of faithful love were enacted there as well. Amid all these scenes moved the lady of the castle.

A few of the typical views of castle life in which the women figured conspicuously will serve to give a more particular setting to the general idea of their status and employments. While men gave themselves up to feats of arms, the women had the task of hospitably entertaining the guests who frequented the castles; in the interim of these festivities and the exacting care of a host of servants, they applied themselves assiduously to needlework, and in no other way does the woman of the times appear in so pleasant a light as when thus engaged. Her facility in lace and embroidery work is not attested alone by contemporary writers, but has come down to us in its finest expression. The famous Bayeux tapestry, possibly the most ingenious specimen of needlework that the world has known, calls up the most interesting of the castle scenes as related to woman. It is the expression of the artistic and historical sense of Matilda, the wife of William I. In some such lady's bower as has been described, the fair queen assembled the ladies of her court, and the Bayeux tapestry was created amid the interchange of small talk, becoming more serious as at times the figures of the pattern recalled some particular horror of personal loss on the part of some of the ladies present, entailed by the great battle whose glory was the central theme of their labors. With womanly self-effacement, they had in mind only those whose deeds were in this unique manner to be handed down to posterity, and had no thought of the monument to womanly devotion that they were erecting for the honor of the sex. Every scene involved the perpetuation of the memories and the valor of those who were dear to them; and as the record passed into the embroidered pattern, it was dwelt upon with words of glowing pride. In some such way took shape the picture-history of the event that found its consummation in the battle of Senlac.

By its wealth and accuracy of detail, this monument of woman's skill became a historical document of the first order for the period to which it relates. But to the student of the English woman its chief value must lie in its revelation of the depth of the pride and devotion to husbands, brothers, and lovers that it reveals—devotion to the living and the dead alike, which is the secret of its reverent accuracy, excluding as it does vainglorious exaggeration. It thus becomes a memorial of deeds of valor and of defeat, of triumph and of death; a monument to the Norman, but, unwittingly, a monument to the defeated Saxon as well.

We are reminded by this historic tapestry of the pathetic story of Edith of the Swan's Neck. King Harold had been slain on the battlefield by a Norman arrow which had pierced his brain. His mother and the Abbot of Waltham had successfully pleaded with Harold's victorious rival for permission to bury the king within the abbey. Two Saxon monks, Osgod and Ailrick, were deputed by the Abbot of Waltham to search for and bring to the abbey the body of their benefactor. Failing to identify on the field of Senlac (Hastings) the bodies denuded of armor and clothing, they applied to a woman whom Harold, before he was king, had had for a companion, and begged her to assist them in their search. She was called Edith, and surnamed *la belle au cou de cygne*. Edith consented to aid the two monks, and readily discovered the body of him who had been her lover.

The queen who conceived and furthered the execution of the Bayeux tapestry was representative of the best type of Norman womanhood. Her devotion to her husband was proverbial, and his faithfulness to her has never been questioned. Intrigues among persons who could not brook the moral atmosphere of a court such as Matilda maintained were common enough, and the envious breath

of scandal even sought to shake the confidence of her royal husband in her; but all such attempts were unavailing. Matilda became in every sense the consort of William, and thus marked a forward step for the womanhood of the country. Without such recognition of the wife of William I., England would never have had the brilliant and versatile Elizabeth or the wise and womanly Victoria to number among the great examples of high worth which make the list of England's notable women one of the chief glories of her history. As the manners of the court affect the standard of the nation, that the tone of the times was not lower in an age of turbulence, when moral standards were debased, must be to some extent accredited to the example of the queen.

When Matilda died, the country was still rent by fierce hatreds and passionate outbursts; the unplacated Saxon had been little influenced by her. It was reserved for another Matilda, the wife of Henry I., to aid in healing the breach, and, by uniting the discordant elements, put the country in a position for the development of those arts of civilization which only can flourish in an atmosphere of peace. When Matilda, then a *religieuse,* was adjudged by the Church authorities not to have taken the veil, or to have assumed the vows that would have severed her from the world and committed her to a life of virginity, she reluctantly heeded the clamor of the Saxon element of the people, and yielded to the importunities of Henry to become his wife and the country's queen. So was secured to the land a queen in whose veins ran Saxon blood and who had received an Anglo-Saxon education. Through her influence, many salutary laws were enacted to relieve the disabilities of the people. The wives and daughters of the Saxons were secured from insult; the poor and honest trader was assured equity in his business transactions,

and other matters of equal import owed their enactment to the kindly disposed queen. In this manner were allayed animosities which had continued to smoulder under a sense of repeated injustices, and with the growth of mutual confidence there came about an identity of aspiration and effort on the part of the two elements of the population. Intermarriage facilitated this happy tendency, and the perseverance of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, modified indeed by Norman admixture, did much for its furtherance. Thus, the two peoples gradually fused into one nation. That Matilda did much to secure this desirable end entitles her to be regarded as the mother of reconciliation.

The Norman ladies of rank came under the influence of the queen, and it was not uncommon to find them, like the Anglo-Saxon ladies, engaged in the profitable concerns of the poultry yard and the dairy, instead of giving themselves up to court intrigues. The two Matildas represent the best element of the noble womanhood of the day; neither of them was faultless, and the first was charged with an act of vindictiveness toward a Saxon who spurned her love that ill comports with the accepted estimate of her amiability and worth; but while not impeccable, yet both reflected in their lives the signal qualities which, when illustrated in times adverse to them, ennoble the sex.

Returning to the employments of the ladies of the castles, the most typical of these as illustrating the manners of the times, next to the industry of the bower, was the hospitality of the hall. The hostess took her place beside her lord, by virtue of her recognized equality of position, and directed the movements of the servants, who were kept busily employed passing around the dishes—the meat being served upon the spits, from which the guests might carve what they pleased. No forks were used at the table, fingers answering every purpose. On very great

occasions the *pièce de résistance* was a boar's head, which was brought into the hall with a fanfare of trumpets, the guests greeting its appearance with noisy demonstrations. Another delicacy, which a hostess was always pleased to serve to persons of consequence, was peacock. The presence of this bird was the signal for the nobility to pledge themselves afresh to deeds of knightly valor. Cranes formed another of the unusual dishes generally found at these state banquets. As the dinner proceeded, the thirst of the company was assuaged by copious draughts of ale or mead and of spiced wines. That such festivities invariably developed scenes of hilarity and disorder was in the nature of the case, and it was not a strange thing to see the valorous knights, under the mellowing influence of too frequent potations, indulge in such disgraceful acts as throwing bones about the room and at one another, until these bone battles passed into more serious fracases. The woman of refinement had reason to dread these carnivals of gluttony and debauch; and when they became too offensive, she sought the seclusion of her private apartments.

All the while the minstrels played their instruments and sang their songs, often improvising from incidents in the careers of those present, or taking for a theme some vaunting sentiment to which a cup-valorous knight gave expression. No bounds of propriety were observed in the theme or in its treatment by these paid entertainers.

As the dishes were brought in, amid the rude songs and coarse jests of these jongleurs, another company, even more reprobate than they, gathered about the hall door and sought to snatch the dishes out of the hands of the servants. These were the *ribalds* or *letchers*—a set of degraded hangers-on at the castle, lost to all self-respect and ready for any base deed that might be required of them. To them was allotted the refuse of the feast.

A vivid picture of a wedding banquet of the times is afforded in a scene from the earlier career of Hereward, the last of patriotic leaders of the Saxons. The daughter of a Cornish chief had been affianced to one of her countrymen, who was notoriously wicked and tyrannical; but she herself had pledged her affections to an Irish prince. Hereward, who was a guest in the country of Cornwall, became an object of hatred to the Cornish bully, who picked a quarrel with him and in the encounter was slain. This awakened a spirit of vengeance among his fellows, and it was only through the assistance of the young princess that Hereward was enabled to escape from the prison where he had been confined and to flee the country. He carried with him a tender message from the lady to her Irish suitor. In the latter's absence she was again betrothed by her father, and sent a messenger to notify her lover of the near approach of the wedding. He sent forty messengers to her father to demand his daughter's hand by virtue of a promise one time made to him. These were put in prison. Hereward doubted the success of the lover's embassage; and having dyed his skin and colored his hair, he made his way, with three companions, to the young lady's home, arriving there the day of the nuptial feast. The next day, when she was to be conducted to her husband's dwelling, Hereward and his companions entered the hall, and, as strangers, came under especial observation. He saw the eyes of the princess fixed upon him as though she penetrated his disguise; and as if moved by the recollections his presence awakened, she burst into tears.

As was the custom of the times, the bride, in her wedding costume, assisted by her maidens, served the cup to the guests before she left her father's home; and the harper, following, played before each guest as he was served. Hereward had registered an oath not to receive

anything at the hands of a lady until it was proffered by the princess herself. So, when the cup was offered to him by a maiden, he refused it with abruptness, and declined to listen to the harper. His rude conduct raised a tumult of excitement and indignation, whereupon the princess herself approached him and offered the cup, which he received with courtesy. The princess, entirely confirmed in her suspicions as to his identity, threw a ring into his bosom, and, turning to the company, craved indulgence for the stranger, who was not acquainted with their customs. The minstrel remained sullen, whereupon Hereward seized his harp and played with such exquisite skill as to awaken the astonishment of the company. As he played and sang, his companions, "after the manner of the Saxons," joined in at intervals; whereupon the princess, to help him in his assumed character, presented him the rich cloak which was the reward of the minstrel. Suspicions as to his real character were not, however, entirely allayed; and these were increased by his request to the father of the bride for the release of the Irish messengers.

Finding that he had endangered his safety and the success of his plans by his indiscretion, Hereward slipped away unobserved, and, with his companions, lay in ambush the next day along the road by which he knew the bride would be conducted by her father to her new home. As the bridal procession passed, and with it the Irish prisoners, Hereward rushed out upon the unsuspecting company; and while his companions released the prisoners, he seized the lady and bore her away in true knightly fashion. It may well be believed that the bride was soon united in wedlock to the husband of her choice.

One other circumstance in the history of this man, whose life was a series of bold undertakings, serves to

illustrate the superstitions of the times. When King William had besieged the island of Ely, which was the headquarters of Hereward and his large following of Saxon warriors, and had failed to subdue them, he gave heed to the counsel of one of his courtiers, to have recourse to a celebrated witch for aid in the destruction of his foes. Hereward, to spy upon his adversary and discover his plans, disguised himself as a potter, and stopped at the house of the old woman whose magic was to be used against him; that night he followed her and another crone out into the fields, where they engaged in their curious rites. From their conversation he learned of the scheme against him, which was to have a platform erected in the marshes surrounding the island; the hag was to repeat thrice her charm, when he and his followers would be destroyed. Accordingly, when the platform was erected and the besiegers drew as near as they could, expectantly awaiting Hereward's destruction, he and his companions, under the cover of the brush, crept close to the platform and, taking advantage of the favorable direction of the wind, set fire to the reeds. The witch, who was about to repeat her charm for the third time, leaped from the platform in terror, and was killed, while in the panic many of the soldiers lost their lives by fire or by water. The scene here depicted bears a remarkable similarity to the weird rites of the ancient British Druidesses, and doubtless represents a continuance of the mysteries of that order, which came down in forms of magic and witchcraft through many centuries.

This glimpse of the witchcraft that was to become more prominent, or at least with which we become more familiar at a later period, will suffice to show that the plane of general intelligence was not yet high. Education was limited to subjects that have no special interest for us

to-day. Such as it was, it was accessible to the lower classes as well as to the upper. There were schools connected with the churches and the monasteries. Apparently, there was no distinction in the subjects pursued by the sexes, excepting in the case of the nobility, whose sons were trained for the positions they were to occupy. It would appear that some priests were so zealous for the prosperity of their schools that they sought to entice scholars from other schools to their own. A law to correct the practice provided "that no priest receive another's scholar without leave of him whom he had previously followed." Latin was in the list of the studies pursued by the ladies, but few could read in the vernacular.

At that day there was the same tendency that is familiar to-day,—to cast alleged feminine inconsistencies into the form of adages. One of these proverbs is found in the instructions of a baron who was counselling his son on his going out from the paternal roof: "If you should know anything that you would wish to conceal," says this generalizer from a personal experience, "tell it by no means to your wife, if you have one; for if you let her know it, you will repent of it the first time you displease her."

The amusements that were popular in the Anglo-Saxon days continued during the Norman period, but hunting and hawking, by reason of the stringent game laws, were sports practically limited to the upper class. The lady kept her falcons and knew well how to set them on the quarry, and with the men she could ride in the hunt to the baying of the hounds. It is interesting to note that with women the usual method of riding was on a side-saddle; seldom are they found seated otherwise in the representations of riding scenes. Among all classes dancing seems to have been in favor. The exercise was more graceful and intricate than the dance of the Saxons.

Among the young people of the lower classes it was the chief amusement, and was attended by much mirth and boisterousness. Games of chance were popular among both sexes, and chess was a favorite pastime.

The art of the Anglo-Saxon gleemen and maidens under the Normans was represented by two classes of public entertainers, the minstrels and the jongleurs. The minstrels confined themselves for the most part to music and poetry; while the jongleurs were the jugglers, tricksters, and exhibitors of trained animals. But the distinction was not sharply drawn, although in general the minstrels were considered to afford a higher form of entertainment than did the jongleurs. Both sexes were represented in these bands of itinerant amusement purveyors. Companies of them were more or less permanently attached to the retinues of the great barons, for the whiling away of the long evenings and the entertainment of the guests. The sentiments of the songs and stories of these people were full of suggestiveness and coarseness. The merry and licentious lives of the disreputable traffickers in amusement brought them under moral reprobation, even in that rude age. They drew into their ranks many persons of depraved life, who, when the times improved, contributed, by their abandon, to create sentiment against all profligate strollers. Yet these minstrels represented the beginnings of music and of vernacular literature after the conquest of England.

In the matter of dress there was a marked departure from the Anglo-Saxon costume, which varied little. Just as long as England was not in touch with continental ideas and customs, the women of the country wore the costumes of their ancestors. That dress is cosmopolitan never entered into their conceptions, any more than it does into those of any of the Eastern nations who in modern times

have been brought suddenly into the stream of European customs and manners. But with the coming of the Normans, national conservatism yielded to comparison with the fashions of other peoples, and fashion assumed the sceptre that it has continued to wield over the English woman. The changes in dress were at first slight, but by the end of the twelfth century they had become sufficiently marked to be the target of witticism and the subject of satire. The foibles of the women were little regarded by the writers of the time. The dress of the men was not passed over in like silence, however; it drew from the censors of the day the severest strictures on account of its flaunting meagreness and its improprieties in the eyes of its monkish critics. The same condemnation was visited upon the practice of the men of dyeing their hair or otherwise coloring it, wearing flowing locks, and painting their faces. Such fashions were styled reprehensible and effeminate. It would have been instructive to subsequent generations if these censorious critics had not been so gallant toward women, and had given to us the spicy descriptions of feminine attire that, in their indignation, they have afforded us of that of the men. Had they but realized that it was the sex whose sins of dress they passed over so lightly, with charity or indifference, that was to follow the inconsequential wake of fashion into the wildest vagaries of costume and adornment, they would have let the men have their brief day, and massed their strictures against those who were to elevate fashion to an art and make of its following a devotion. As it is, for our knowledge of the dress of the weaker sex we are dependent upon the illuminations, whose brilliant coloring and faithfulness of detail left little for the text to elucidate. That the new styles were not received with approbation by the clerical artists is clear enough from the caricatures and

exaggerations of them that appear in their drawings. The inordinate length of the sleeves, reaching as they did, in a long, mandolin-shaped pocket, to the knees of the wearer, made them surely hideous enough to draw out the indignation of those who had artistic sensibilities to be shocked.

That the notion of fashionable dress as Satanic is very old is shown by one of the representations of his infernal majesty, where he is portrayed dressed in the height of feminine fashion. One of the sleeves of his gown is short and full, while the other, in caricature of the style of the day, is so long that it has to be tied in a knot to get it out of the way. The gown, also, being of impossible length and fulness, is disposed of by the simple expedient of knotting.

In the dress of Satan, as an exponent of the iniquity of feminine attire, there also appears unmistakable evidence of a tight bodice of stays, the lacing of which, after drawing his majesty's waist into approved dimensions, hangs carelessly down to view and terminates in a tag. As stays were not commonly worn, and as a writer at a little later time is found vehemently inveighing against them, it is fair to conclude that their presence on Satan is to indicate, in the eyes of the better element of the day, the indelicacy and impropriety of their use. Ridiculous and unsightly as were the long sleeves and other novelties of dress, the particular displeasure with which they were regarded by the element whose views the ecclesiastics reflected must be attributed somewhat to their foreign origin. Although they were introduced into the country by the Normans, the long sleeves, at least, appear to have originated in Italy. Down to the twelfth century, there was sufficient conservatism remaining to deprecate the introduction of foreign novelties, just as in Elizabeth's days the economists strongly protested against bringing into the country "foreign gewgaws."

The girdle remained a part of the dress of the women, although it was not so much in evidence as in the Anglo-Saxon time. It was probably worn under the gown, and in some cases may have been dispensed with. That queens and princesses, however, wore very fine girdles, ornamented with pearls and precious stones, is abundantly attested by the contemporary writers.

The mantle was the most changeful article of dress at this period. Sometimes it was worn in the old way, being put on by passing the head through an aperture made for that purpose; but more often it was worn opening down the front and fastened at the throat by an embroidered collar clasped by a brooch. Again, it was fastened in a similar way at the throat, but covered only one side of the form, falling coquettishly over the shoulder and hanging down the side. A particularly pleasing effect was obtained by having it fasten at the throat by a collar, whose rich, gold-embroidered border continued down the front to the waist. Sometimes the garment was sleeveless, and again it was worn with short sleeves, or sleeves long and full. For winter wear, it covered the form entirely and terminated in a hood. These mantles were often of the finest imported textiles, embroidered in elegant figures and with richly wrought borders, and were lined throughout with costly furs.

The kerchief, like the mantle, quite lost its conventional style in the period we are describing, and was often omitted altogether. It was usually worn over the head, and hanging down to the right breast, while the end on the left side was gathered about the neck and thrown over the right shoulder. Sometimes it was gathered in fulness upon the head and bound there by a diadem, though otherwise worn as just described. Toward the end of the twelfth century it became much smaller, and was tied under the chin,

looking very much like an infant's cap. The women's shoes were very much the same as those worn by the Anglo-Saxons. It is quite likely that the stockings were close-fitting and short, as was the style among the men.

There were different ways of wearing the hair, but the most usual was to have it parted in front and flowing loosely down the back, with a lock on either side falling over the shoulders and upon the breast; this was the style for young girls especially. Another fashion was to have it fall down the back in two masses, where it was wrapped by ribbons and so bound into tails. Young girls never wore a headdress of any sort. On reaching maturity, it was usual for the women to enclose their hair in a net, with a kerchief cap drawn tightly over it.

The ornaments in use need no particular description, because of their similarity to those worn during the Anglo-Saxon period. Crowns were, of course, the chief adornments of queens on state occasions; circlets of gold, elegantly patterned, formed the diadems of the noble ladies; and half-circlets of gold, connected behind, constituted the distinctive headdress of women of wealth. Rings, armlets, and necklaces, as well as the generally serviceable brooch, were in use.

Turning from the fashions of the wealthy to the condition of the poor, what a difference appears! The age was one of sharp contrasts; for while gayety reigned in the high circles of court and castle, wretchedness was more usual in the hovels with their mud walls and thatched roofs, to which nature may have added the gracious garniture of herbs, mosses, and lichens. But it would be too much to assume that the persons of humble estate were not happy in their own way. Lacking the luxuries of the table and the fine attire of the ladies of the castles, life still had for them many elements of pure joy. But while

the women of the lower ranks would have contrasted well in the matter of morals with the women of the nobility, yet no more then than now was virtue the exclusive possession of any class.

The monasteries were not only centres of culture, but were also the great distributing centres of charity, the nuns being looked upon as the especial friends of the poor. We hear little of complaint against the character of these houses at this time, and it is clear that the rules for their direction had become efficacious for the establishing of a discipline sufficiently rigid, on the whole, to ensure exemplary character. Many penances and mortifications were imposed on the nuns, besides others which were voluntarily assumed. In a book of rules published at this time appears the following, which seems to indicate that even sunshine savored too much of worldliness for the occupants of the religious houses: "My dear sisters, love your windows as little as you may, and let them be small, and the parlor's the narrowest; let the cloth in them be twofold, black cloth, the cross white within and without." It may be, however, that it was not too much sunlight that was to be avoided, but men, who sought to converse with the nuns at their windows. This indeed appears to be the true meaning of the recommendation, as is indicated by another enjoinment: "If any man become so mad and unreasonable that he put forth his hand toward the window cloth, shut the window quickly and leave him."

Besides the nuns, whose office dedicated them to acts of charity, many of the noble ladies found pleasure in alleviating the afflictions of the poor. In their care of the distressed they were incited to acts of humility by the very high value that the Church placed upon the performance of such deeds. Matilda, the good wife of Henry I., had the training of the monastery in developing her benevolent

instincts, and set an example to the ladies of her court by establishing the leper hospital of Saint Giles; there she herself washed the feet of lepers, esteeming such lowly service as done unto Christ. In a hard and cruel age, the gentler sentiments common to womanly nature, especially when under the influence of Christian feeling, poured themselves out in a wealth of affection upon those who were stricken and left helpless by the hardness of the times.

Chapter V

The Women of the Middle Ages

V

THE WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE AGES

THERE was an almost total lack of central authority or of legal restraint throughout the land during the long conflict between Stephen and Matilda, wife of the Count of Anjou, whom the feudal party, in violation of their vows to Henry I., refused to accept as queen; and to the other terrors of war were added the depredations of a host of mercenary soldiers brought over from the continent. To quote the chronicler William of Newburgh: "In the olden days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did that which was right in his own eyes; but in England now it was worse; for there was a king, but impotent, and every man did what was wrong in his own eyes." The Petersborough continuation of the *English Chronicle* gives as dark a picture of the state of affairs: "They filled the land full of castles and filled the castles full of devils. They took all those they deemed had any goods, men and women, and tortured them with tortures unspeakable; many thousands they slew with hunger—they robbed and burned all the villages, so that thou mightest fare a day's journey nor ever find a man dwelling in a village nor land tilled. Corn, flesh, and cheese there was none in the land. The bishops were ever cursing them, but they cared naught therefor, for they were all forcursed and forsworn and forlorn. . . . Men said openly that Christ slept and

His saints. Such and more than we can say we suffered for our sins." Such grim experiences of unlicensed feudalism did much for the social education of the English people, and similar lawlessness was never repeated in the history of the country. Out of the furnace through which England passed, the English character emerged, purified of some of its dross of Anglo-Saxon sluggishness and Norman arrogance, and finely representative of the tempered elements of both peoples. A sense of solidarity was awakened.

The feudal system found its expression in various forms of homage and of fealty, upon which it was founded. It embraced, among many services and liabilities, some that related to women. On the death of a tenant leaving an heiress under fourteen years of age, the lord upon whose lands the tenant had dwelt, and to whom he owed the military and other services of his lower position, became the guardian in chivalry to the maiden, and had charge of her person and her lands until she was twenty-one—unless, on reaching the age of sixteen, she availed herself of her right to "sue out her livery" by the payment of a half-year's income of her estate. Moreover, he was entitled to dispose of her in marriage to any person of rank equal to her own. In case the young lady did not approve of the selection made for her, and rejected her guardian's choice or married without his consent, she had to forfeit to him a sum of money equal to what was called the value of her marriage—a sum equal to what the lord might have expected to receive if the marriage as planned by him had taken place. During her wardship the lord had the right to her land, and might assign or sell his guardianship over her. These rights which the lord held over the person and possessions of his ward applied, in the later feudal period, equally to male and female.

Such was the relationship of the ward to her lord, and the same system of knight service which gave him these rights in orphaned minors gave him, as well, the right to collect a fee upon the marriage of the daughters of any of his tenants. Such a system, while it deprived the young woman of absolute freedom in her selection of a husband, did not of necessity work great hardship, as each fair young woman had her knight dedicated to her by the solemn vows of chivalry, from whom her troth, once given, was not apt to be easily wrested. Upon the merits of the system itself we are not called upon to pass judgment; but certainly chivalry, which was its finest product, was responsible for the introduction into the English character of splendid ideals of womanhood, which found expression in a deference amounting almost to worship.

Yet the picture has a reverse side as well, and it is only by considering both aspects of the age that its real meaning as regards its effect upon the womanhood of the time becomes clear. This other side of chivalry is well expressed by Freeman, than whom no one is better qualified to speak. He says: "The chivalrous spirit is, above all things, a class spirit. The good knight is bound to endless fantastic courtesies towards men and still more towards women of a certain rank; he may treat all below that rank with any degree of scorn or cruelty. . . . Chivalry is short in its morals very much what feudalism is in law: each substitutes purely personal obligations, obligations devised in the interest of an exclusive class, for the more homely duties of an honest man and a good citizen."

The extravagant reverence and regard paid to women of the higher ranks of society did not have a firm basis in inherent moral principle either in them or in their worshippers, so that it was an easy passage from idealized woman to materialized woman. Life cannot long subsist on the

perfervid products of a social imagination. As a revulsion of noble minds from coarseness and as a protest against tyranny and vice, chivalry fulfilled a high mission; but, unfortunately, its exalted admiration of woman fell to a physical appreciation of its subject. Not her womanhood, but her graces of person came to evoke the passionate devotion of the knight. An admiration fantastic and romantic, expressing itself in all sorts of extravagance, a worship of mere physical beauty—such was the nature of chivalry in its later expression. Instead of an idol, woman became but a toy.

In no respect was this sentimentality better illustrated than in the nature of the knightly devotion of the time. When not in the camp, the life of the knight was an idle one, and was spent for the most part in sentimental attendance upon ladies at court or castle. It was there that his deeds of prowess won rewards rather more generously than discreetly given by the lady to whom he had pledged his devotion; so that, with all the circumstances of outward respect for women, surpassing in ostentatious display that shown by any other age, it is a painful fact that in no other age was there such license in the association of the sexes. It is a striking comment upon the manners of the times that "gallantry" should have come to signify both bravery and illicit love. Chastity was not one of the ornaments of the age of chivalry.

In curious contrast to the attitude of chivalry—a product of the Church—toward women was that of the Church in its official character and expression. The knight elevated woman to the plane of angels, while the priest went to the other extreme. Saint Chrysostom's definition of woman as "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill," continued to be the orthodox view of the

Church. Woman was to be avoided as a temptation by all those who valued the security of their souls; and yet it was the Church, more than any other social force, which gave to woman the dignity and worth that she achieved.

The Church stood for order and even for progress; it summed up in itself all the knowledge and the culture of the times. In the midst of the turmoil and dangers of war and strife, it afforded to women the one haven to which they might flee for security. But its protection was bought at the price of authority over the lives and consciences of its adherents. The lives of women were spent in a round of narrow experience and of duty, and the feasts of the Church, with their processions and ceremonials, furnished to them merely an agreeable break in the monotony of their existence. This was especially true of the lower classes. In an age when belief in supernatural appearances and interferences formed part of the common credence of the masses, the emotional sensibilities of the women were easily appealed to by the priests. By taking advantage of this ignorance, the Church was enabled to hold in absolute control the lives of the simple and credulous women. Women did not hesitate to yield to the Church their freedom of thought and of action, their minds and consciences alike being at the disposal of their ecclesiastical directors; but when the Church taught men to respect their wives, and raised its voice and exerted its influence against the tyranny which placed women in subjection to their male relatives, it was indeed befriending them in a way that hastened the acquirement by them of the real equality which they now enjoy with the other sex.

The relation of women and the Church was not without its anomalies. This is shown curiously in the contrast between the Mariolatry of the age and the attitude of the Church toward the sex of which Mary was the exalted

type. The women were not esteemed fit to receive the Eucharist with uncovered hands; they were forbidden to approach the altar; their married state was yet, in theory at least, considered a condition of sin, for, even among the women of the laity, virginity and celibacy were regarded as almost a state of especial sanctity. But the Church was entirely consistent in its attitude toward women in that it made no distinctions as to class or condition. Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III., while on a visit to Durham Cathedral, after having supped with the king, retired to rest in the priory. The scandalized monks sought an interview with the king and made vigorous protests, so that the queen was obliged to rise, and, clad only in her night apparel, sought accommodations in the castle, beseeching Saint Cuthbert's pardon for having polluted the holy confines with her presence.

Ecclesiastical law operated disastrously against women in declaring for a celibate priesthood. In Anglo-Saxon times the priests married; but the Council of Winchester, in 1076, took a stand against the marriage of the clergy, and forbade priests to take to themselves wives, although it permitted the parish clergy who were already married to continue in the marital state. In 1102, however, it was declared that no married priest should celebrate mass, and in 1215 the Lateran Council definitely pronounced against marriage of priests. Many of the clergy had by no means shown a docile spirit in relation to this invasion of what they considered the domain of their personal rights; when forced into submission, they evaded the ordinances by taking concubines. Even in the fifteenth century, it was not uncommon to find married priests. In the document entitled *Instructions for Parish Priests,* those who were too weak to live uprightly in the celibate state were counselled to take wives. Concubinage, as a substitute for the

interdicted marriage, continued to be practised down to the sixteenth century, nor was this form of illicit living the worst vice of the clergy. Debauchery spread throughout the country, until in the sixteenth century it is said that as many as one hundred thousand women fell under the seductions of the priests, for whose particular pleasures houses of ill fame were kept. From the laity, complaints became general that their wives and daughters were not safe from the advances of the priests. In 1536 the clergy of the diocese of Bangor sent to Cromwell the following remarkable plea against taking away their women from them: "We ourselves shall be driven to seek our living at all houses and taverns, for mansions upon the benefices and vicarages we have none. And as for gentlemen and substantial honest men, for fear of inconvenience, and knowing our frailty and accustomed liberty, they will in no wise board us in their houses." All the literature of the Middle Ages leads to but one conclusion—that the clergy were the great corrupters of domestic virtue among the burgher and agricultural classes. The morals of the lords and ladies of the upper strata of the aristocratic class were of no higher grade; the offenders, however, were seldom the priests, but the gallants of that privileged circle. The lower rank of the aristocracy,—the knights and lesser landholders,—which, with the decline of feudalism, came to be more strongly defined as a separate class, appears to have preserved the best moral tone of any of the classes of mediæval society.

A great deal of light is thrown upon the manners and thought of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by a body of literature which arose during those centuries. The estimation in which the classes of society were held is indicated by one of these *fabliaux*. A party of knights passed through a pleasant and shady meadow, in the midst

of exquisite scenery; they were enchanted by the spot, and wished for meat and wine that they might tarry there and dine on the grass. There followed them a party of clerks, whose feelings were also aroused by the beauty of the place; and, in accord with the frivolous character given them throughout the *fabliaux,* they exclaimed: "Had we fair maidens here, how pleasant a spot for play!" After they had passed on, there came a party of villains, who, with their grosser ideas, thought not of the beauty of the place at all, but proceeded to indulge themselves in carnal pleasures and to use it for mean purposes.

These *fabliaux* show us that Cupid disdained conventional restraint then as now; for in them the marriage of persons in different classes often furnishes a theme for the story—this, too, notwithstanding the sharp caste distinctions which existed. Usually, the maiden is possessed of more beauty than wealth and belongs to the poor-knight class; she is wedded to a peasant or villain who has become wealthy. The husband turns out to be a brute; the lady is crafty and cunning. He beats and abuses her, according to the instincts of his boorish nature; she, on the other hand, proves faithless as often as opportunity presents. The writers never visit condemnation upon her, for her husband is considered as undeserving of the possession of such a prize. It is a curious commentary on the manner of the times that upon the same manuscript, written by the same person, appear *fabliaux* of this sort and stories of holy women dying in defence of their chastity. This contradiction runs throughout the literature of the period—the praise of virtue and the narration of gross immorality without an effort to condemn it. One of the most peculiar facts of the age is the extreme to which was carried the adoration of the Virgin and the strange things she is made to do and to countenance. In the mythology of the Middle

Ages—for so we must class most of the mediæval stories of the saints and of the Virgin—to ardent and imaginative temperaments the Virgin took the character of Venus, and is frequently represented as the patroness of love. One of the religious stories tells us that some young men, while playing ball in front of a church, approached the porch of the edifice, upon which was a beautiful statue of Our Lady. One of them laid down his ring, which he had received from his lady-love. Then, to his amazement, he saw the image, which was "fresh and new," fix its eyes upon the ring. He became enamored of it, and, after due obeisance, he addressed Our Lady thus:

"'I promise duly,
That all my life I'll serve thee truly;
For never saw I maiden fair
Whose beauty could with thine compare,
So courtly and so debonaire:
And she who gave this ring to me,
Though fair and sweet herself, than thee
A hundred times less fair, I trow,
Shall yield to thee her empire now.
'Tis true I've loved her long and well,
As many a fond caress can tell;
But now, forgotten and neglected,
Her meaner charms for thine rejected,
I give her ring—a lasting token
Of faith which never shall be broken,
Nor shared with maid or wife shall be
The love I proffer unto thee.'"

With this address, he placed the ring upon the finger of the image. Our Lady appeared flattered by the conquest she had made, and bent the finger on which the ring had been placed in order that it might not be withdrawn. The lover was astounded by the miracle, and was advised by his friends to retire from the world and to devote himself to the adoration and service of the Blessed Virgin.

Neglecting this advice, he allowed love to resume its place and led to the altar the maiden who had given him the ring. But Our Lady was not to be deprived of her adorer, and when he laid himself upon the nuptial couch she immediately threw him into a profound slumber, and when he awoke he found her lying between him and his bride:

> "She showed him straight her finger, where
> Was still the ring he'd given her;
> And well became her hand that ring
> Upon her soft skin glittering.
> 'Instead of love, thou'st shown,' said she,
> 'But falseness and disloyalty.
> And ill hast kept thy faith to me.
> Behold the ring thou gavest, for token
> And pledge of love fore'er unbroken,
> And call'd me a hundred times more fair
> Than ever earthly maidens were.
> I have been ever true, but thou
> Hast taken a meaner leman now;
> Hast left for stinking nettle the rose,
> Sweet eglantine for flower more gross.'"

In the end, Our Lady forces him to leave his wife that he may dedicate himself entirely to her service. In other *fabliaux* and in the chronicles, Mary is represented under the guise of the Lady Venus, who often appears in these romances. In this adoration of the Virgin as a maiden impelled by the same loves and hates as any mortal woman, it is not difficult to see the spirit of chivalry in its sensual expression. Surely, if every lady had her knight, the Blessed Virgin, also, must have her devoted admirers; and by the height of her position and greater worthiness as the Queen of Heaven, by so much should she rise above any other woman in her right to command such adorers.

When we pass from the status of woman in the Middle Ages to her occupations, the subject becomes narrowed, not only by the lesser importance of the facts which

merely illustrate rather than demonstrate her position, but also because we shall exclude from our general consideration the women of the manors, the nuns, and, in their industrial capacities, the women of the guilds. These important classes demand separate treatment.

After the middle of the twelfth century, it is easier to study the domestic manners of the people. We can, for instance, obtain very precise information as to the style of the dwellings in which they lived. There was a general uniformity in the houses, however they might vary in particulars. In the twelfth century, the hall continued to be the main part of the dwelling. Adjoining it at one end was the chamber, while at the other end might be found the stable. The whole building stood in an enclosure consisting of a yard in front and a garden in the rear, surrounded by a hedge and ditch. The house had a door in the front, and within, one door led to the chamber, and another to the stable. The chamber, also, frequently had a door leading out to the garden. There were usually windows in the hall, the stable and the chamber being lighted by openings in the partitions between them and the hall, as well as by slits in the outer walls. The windows themselves were commonly merely openings, which might be closed by wooden shutters. There was usually one such window in the chamber, besides those in the hall, so that it was better lighted than the stable.

From the *fabliaux* we can obtain very precise ideas of the distribution of the rooms in the houses of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thus, in one of the *fabliaux,* an old woman of mean condition of life is represented as visiting a burgher's wife, who, from a feeling of vanity, takes her into the chamber to show her the new bed, a very handsome affair. Afterward, when this lady takes refuge with the old dame, the latter conducts her from the hall to

the chamber adjoining. The outer door of the chamber, by which egress could be had from the house without going through the hall, often figures in the stories as aiding the escape of the lovers of guilty wives, on the unexpected entrance of the husbands into the hall. It was in the chamber that fireplaces and chimneys were first introduced into mediæval houses.

As the grouping of the rooms upon the ground floor made the house less compact and more susceptible to successful attack, the custom arose of having upper chambers. The upper room was called the solar, because it received much light from the sun. At first it was but a small chamber, approached from the outside. These outer stairs are often referred to in the *fabliaux,* as in the *fabliau* of D'Estourmi, where a burgher and his wife deceive three monks of a neighboring abbey, who make love to the lady; she conceals her husband in the upper chamber, to which he goes by an outer staircase. The monks enter the hall, and the husband sees from the upper room, through a lattice, all that happens. In another *fabliau,* a lady uses the solar as a hiding place for her husband, who has disguised himself as a gallant in order to test his wife's faithfulness. She penetrates his disguise, and, after closing the door of the solar upon him, sends a servant to give him a good beating, as an importunate suitor whom she desires to cure of his annoying passion. The husband, too mortified to reveal his identity and disclose his doubts as to his wife, has no redress but to sustain his assumed character and to escape down the outer stairs, pursued by the servants. The chamber soon came to be the most important part of the house, and frequently its name was given to the whole dwelling, a house with a solar being called an upper-storied chamber. The more considerable manors and castles differed from the ordinary houses only

in having a greater assemblage of rooms and more details than were found in the smaller dwellings.

Toward the fourteenth century, the rooms of houses generally began to be numerous, and the houses were often built around a court, the additions being chiefly to the number of offices and chambers. Wood continued to be the usual material for their construction. A new apartment was added to the house—the parlor, so called because it was the talking room. It was derived from the religious houses, in which the parlor was the reception room. As furniture was scanty, the rooms of the mediæval house were almost bare. Chairs were very few, and seats in the masonry of the wall continued for centuries to be the principal accommodation of the kind; benches for seats and places of deposit of personal or household articles were usually made of a few boards laid across trestles. In the thirteenth century, the beds in the chamber came to be partitioned off by curtains, which showed an advance in modesty, as it was customary to sleep wholly undressed. Throughout the Middle Ages, the comforts of the houses were quite primitive; even the houses themselves were generally without architectural grace and frequently very unsubstantial. When watchmen were appointed in the towns, they were provided with a "hook" with which to pull down a house when on fire, if its proximity to others threatened their destruction. As there was an absence of luxury in the houses and their furnishings, much value was placed on plate, which came to be a sign of wealth and social distinction. Dress, also, aided in marking distinctions between the wealthy and those in less fortunate circumstances, as did the luxuries found upon the tables of the former.

This fact of the general character of the discomforts of living, without regard to rank or condition, gave occasion

for sumptuary laws—"the toe of the peasant pressed closely on the heel of the lord, and the gulf that parted them was the number of dishes upon their table, the quality of the cloth they put on, and the kind of fur they might wear to keep off the cold."

Glass began to be introduced into dwelling houses in the time of Henry III., but was regarded as a great luxury. Pipes for carrying the refuse water and slops from the houses to sewers or cesspools were one of the great sanitary reforms of the reign of Edward I. The same able monarch made the use of baths popular among his people. The floors of the houses continued to be covered with an armful of hay, or a bundle of birch boughs or of rushes, although during the fourteenth century some of the wealthier farmers and persons of the trading classes and the nobility had begun to use imported carpets and hangings. Table linen and napkins were also coming into service. The use of forks was confined to royalty.

When the fine ladies went abroad in their vehicles or were carried in their chairs, they had to plow through streets deep with mire and filth; so much so, that it was not unusual for coaches to stick fast and depend upon the aid of some friendly teamster to extricate them. The sanitation of the dwellings was little better than that of the streets. The stench of the houses of the poor was so great that the priests made it an excuse for failure to pay parochial visits to them. The better class of houses were, of course, kept much cleaner.

The impression that food in the Middle Ages was coarse and not elaborate is not borne out, as we have seen, by the facts; for, from Anglo-Saxon times down, the people were very fond of the table, and in the higher circles elaborate banquets stood as one of the most usual resources of a hospitality which had to make up for its

barrenness in other ways by the bounties of elaborate feasts, so that we are quite prepared for Alexander Neckam's list of kitchen requisites. This ecclesiastic of the latter half of the twelfth century has left us a list of the things to be found in a well-ordered kitchen. Besides his list, we have the testimony of cookbooks of the time, which give directions for making dishes that are both complicated and toothsome. Indeed, the position of cook was one of importance, and upon him often rested, in great houses, the honor of the establishment.

In this connection may be given some of the curious injunctions of the Anglo-Saxon penitentials, which continued to be quoted throughout the Middle Ages, becoming superstitious beliefs after they had lost their ecclesiastical character and undergone the changes which, with the lapse of time, develop folklore. One of the oddest prescribed that in case a "mouse fall into liquor, let it be taken out, and sprinkle the liquor with holy-water, and if it be alive, the liquor may be used, but if it be dead, throw the liquor out and cleanse the vessel." Another said: "He who uses anything a dog or mouse has eaten of, or a weasel polluted, if he do it knowingly, let him sing a hundred psalms; and if he knew it not, let him sing fifty psalms." These are but samples of many superstitions with which the thought of the Middle Ages was tinctured.

A considerable treatise might be written upon the superstitions of the English women; it would contain astonishing disclosures as to the effect of the unreal world of fairies, goblins, and the like upon woman's development and status during the Middle Ages. She was undoubtedly influenced in her daily life, in almost all her duties and undertakings, by the terrors with which her superstitions filled her. The legacy of a pagan system was slowly thrown off, and, with all the credulity of the religion of

the times, it is to the credit of the Church that, by its proscriptions as well as by its healthier teaching, superstition in many of its forms lessened its hold upon the minds of the people. And yet it was needful, if historical fact denotes a social necessity, that these superstitions should culminate in a belief in witchcraft, and woman, because of her credulity, become the scapegoat of the gnomes and witches which existed in her simple faith. Even so cultured a person as Augustine, one of the most prominent of the Church Fathers of his time, declared it to be insolent to doubt the existence of fauns, satyrs, and suchlike demoniac beings, which lie in wait for women and have intercourse with them and children by them. It was this belief which extended into a labyrinth of darkness and superstition throughout the Middle Ages. The reasoning of the Church was perfectly simple: if the miracles of the Apostles and of Christ were of divine agency, then the marvels performed by magicians before the astonished eyes of the heathen were to be accredited to Satan. The Church never doubted the existence of malignant spirits, but bent its endeavors toward persuading the people to give up converse with them. If a woman gave herself over to Satan or any of his minions, the only resource was to put her to death. Horrible as were the witch burnings of the Middle Ages, the Church sincerely believed that it was exorcising the Devil from the lives of the people; and by the terrible examples it made of those who were accounted as having sold themselves to the Evil One, it believed it was placing a deterrent upon others who might be minded to yield themselves to diabolical possession. The Church was but sharing the universal belief of the times, and, as the guardian of the spiritual interests of mankind, it sought the purification of society by severe measures which, it felt, were alone suited to

the gravity of the subject. From this belief in devil possession arose a veritable system of Christian magic; charms, amulets, exorcisms, abounded; thus, white magic was opposed to black magic.

But when the belief in witchcraft led to papal promulgations against it and against all who dared entertain doubts upon the subject, and when it led also to the appointment of tribunals for the trying of "witches," there was placed in the hands of malice and ignorance a power from which no woman, however exalted in rank or pure in character, was secure, provided only she incurred the enmity of someone bent upon effecting her ruin.

The genesis of the belief lies even back of the prevailing superstitions of the times, and is to be found in the lower regard in which the female sex was held. As we have said, chivalry did not cover with its ægis all women, but only those of a certain class; in the Middle Ages, the opinion held of women in general was not flattering to the sex. The descriptions of witch trials and the processes for the extortion of confessions; the indignities of many sorts to which women were subjected; the horrors of a system which virtually made one become an informer upon her neighbor, lest she be anticipated by charges preferred against herself; the whole dreary round of the subject and its literature: all these are too uninviting to permit of detail. It is sufficient for our purpose to say that throughout Europe—for the delusion was so widespread—certainly not less than a million persons were burned, or otherwise put to death, as witches during the Middle Ages. So great a holocaust had to be offered up by women as a sin offering for their sex!

The state of education had much to do with the manners and opinions of the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there was a feeling of the necessity

for extending and improving education. There was spread abroad a degree of popular instruction. It was not an uncommon thing for ladies to be able to read and write. Among the amusements of their leisure hours, reading began to have a very much larger place than formerly. Yet, popular literature—the tales, ballads, and songs—was still communicated orally rather than in writing, though books were more extensively circulated. Often persons of wealth and culture had extensive libraries. Excepting in the case of those who followed or desired to follow the career of scholars, the women were less illiterate than the men.

In considering the dress of the women of England during the Middle Ages, the sumptuary laws passed for its regulation are of interest in themselves as affording a view of the dress of the several classes of society, and they also serve to illustrate upon what simple lines the distinctions of society were drawn.

In the thirty-seventh year of the reign of Edward III., a curious complaint was submitted to Parliament by the Commons against general extravagance in the use of apparel; whereupon an act was passed in regulation of the matter. One of the provisions of this act, as it related to women, prescribed that the wives and children of the grooms and servants of the lords and of tradesmen and artificers should not wear veils costing more than twelvepence each. The wives and children of the tradesmen and artificers themselves should wear no veils excepting those made with thread and manufactured in the kingdom; nor any kind of furs excepting those of lambs, rabbits, cats, and foxes. The cloth for their dresses was also to be of a prescribed kind. The wives and children of esquires—gentlemen under the estate of knighthood—might not wear cloth of gold, of silk, or of silver; nor any

ornaments of precious stones, nor furs of any kind; nor any purfling or facings upon their garments; neither should they use *esclaires, crinales,* or *trosles*—certain forms of hairpins, and suchlike ornaments.

In the case of knights of a certain income, their wives and children were prohibited from wearing miniver or ermine as linings for their garments or trimming for their sleeves. The lower classes were restricted to blankets and russets for their attire, and these were not to cost more than twelvepence per yard, unless the income of the man was above forty shillings. It is not probable that these enactments were rigidly enforced, and when Henry IV. came to the throne he found it necessary to revive the prohibiting statutes of his predecessor. A number of such sumptuary laws were passed during succeeding reigns, but it is not probable that they were ever really effective. Nor were the satires and witticisms of the poets and other writers of the day more effectual than legislation in correcting the extravagances and vices of dress. Whether the poet or the moralist pointed their shafts against them, the dames and the dandies of the time continued to dress as pleased them.

Some of these criticisms so sum up the dress of the day, that to quote them is to see the fine lady attired in all her bewildering array of beautiful stuffs. William de Lorris, in his celebrated poem, the *Romance of the Rose,* has drawn the character of Jealousy, and represents him as reproaching his wife for her insatiable love of finery, which, he tells her, is solely to make her attractive in the eyes of her gallants. He then enumerates the parts of her dress, consisting of mantles lined with sable, surcoats, neck linens, wimples, petticoats, shifts, pelices, jewels, chaplets of fresh flowers, buckles of gold, rings, robes, and rich furs. Then he adds: "You carry the worth of one hundred

pounds in gold and silver upon your head—such garlands, such coiffures with gilt ribbons, such mirrors framed in gold, so fair, so beautifully polished; such tissues and girdles, with expensive fastenings of gold, set with precious stones of smaller size; and your feet shod so primly, that the robe must be often lifted up to show them." And in a subsequent part of the poem the ladies are advised, satirically, if their ankles be not handsome and their feet small and delicate, to hide them by wearing long robes, trailing upon the pavement. Those, on the contrary, who were more favored in this respect were advised to elevate their robes, as if it were to give access to air, that the passer-by might see and admire their trim feet and ankles.

Such were some of the adornments of the fine ladies of the thirteenth century. It is instructive to turn to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and study the costumes of some of the characters as they are interpreted by Strutt. This will afford a view of the dress of typical persons in the ordinary ranks of life. The Wife of Bath is drawn by Chaucer at full length as a shameless woman, pert, loquacious, and bold, whose favorite occupation is gossiping and rambling abroad in search of fashionable diversions, in the absence of her husband. She had the art of making fine cloth. Her dress materials were expensive, for she had kerchiefs, or head linen, which she wore on Sunday, so fine that they were equal in value to ten pounds; and her stockings were made of fine red scarlet cloth, and "straightway gartered upon her legs"; her shoes were also new, and to them she had a pair of spurs attached, because she was to ride upon horseback; she wore a hat as broad as a buckler or a target; and she herself informs us that upon holidays she was accustomed to wear gay scarlet gowns.

The Carpenter's Wife, the heroine of the Miller's Tale, has her dress partly described: the collar of her shift was embroidered both before and behind with black silk; her girdle was barred or striped with silk; her apron, bound about her hips, was clean and white, and full of plaits. The tapes of her white headdress were embroidered in the same manner as the collar of her shift; her fillet, or headband, was broad and was made of silk, and "set full high"; probably meaning with a bow or topknot on the upper part of her head. Attached to her girdle was a purse of leather, tasselled or fringed with silk, and ornamented with *latoun*—a kind of copper alloy of which ornaments were made—in the shape of pearls. She wore a brooch or fibula upon "her low collar," as broad, says the poet, as the boss of a buckler; her shoes "were laced high upon her legs."

In addition to these characters of Chaucer, it may be added that the country Ale-Wife is thus described by a contemporary writer: "She put on her fairest smocke; her petticoat of a good broad red; her gowne of grey, faced with buckram; her square-thrumed hat; and before her she hung a clean white apron."

The subject of public entertainment in the Middle Ages brings to light curious practices. In the towns, the burghers were not willing to entertain strangers gratuitously, notwithstanding the Scriptural injunction to do so, reinforced by the reminder that thereby some have entertained angels unawares. The custom of offering entertainment to travellers was, however, still practised in the country districts, but the Anglo-Saxon notion of three days as a reasonable limit for the tarrying of wayfarers seems still to have obtained. Aside from the public inns, rich burghers opened their homes, with their superior comforts, to royal personages and to rich barons, for an honorarium. They

frequently practised extortion upon their accidental guests, and had arts to allure such to their homes. While having the appearance of great exclusiveness, they nevertheless employed persons to be on the watch for travellers. These would approach such strangers, engage them in conversation, and, on pretence of being from the same part of the country, offer guidance and advice to the stranger, who was usually glad to be directed to an "exclusive" place for entertainment. In some of these places, as well as in the public inns, the guest would be beguiled into contracting gambling or other debts beyond his ability to pay in money, whereupon his belongings were seized, although their value might be greatly in excess of his obligation. The manners and morals of the women in these private places of entertainment were not always commendable.

The tavern was the place of resort for a large part of the middle class and practically all the lower class of mediæval society. Even the women spent much of their time gossiping and drinking in such places, where they found great latitude for carrying out low intrigues. The tavern was, in short, the great rendezvous for those who sought amusement of any sort. It was the ordinary haunt of gamblers. In one of the *fabliaux,* a young profligate is represented as turning into a tavern before which the tavern boy is calling out the price of the beverages on tap there. After inquiring the price of the wines, and receiving the information from the host, the latter goes on to enumerate the attractions of his house: "Within are all sorts of comforts; painted chambers, and soft beds, raised high with white straw, and made soft with feathers; here within is hostel for love affairs, and when bedtime comes you will have pillows of violets to hold your head more softly; and, finally, you will have electuaries and rose-water, to wash your mouth and face." He orders a gallon of wine,

and immediately afterward a *belle demoiselle* makes her appearance, for such in those times were reckoned among the attractions of the tavern. It is soon arranged that she shall share his apartment with him, and then a general carousal ensues in which he loses all his money and has to leave even his clothes in payment of his bill. These alewives were looked upon as past masters in deceit, and were heartily despised by those who did not fall into their clutches. In a carved *miserere* in Ludlow Church, representing Doomsday, one of these characters is depicted as about to be cast into the jaws of hell, carrying with her nothing but the finery of her enticement and her short ale measure. The amusements of the times, excepting those of a grosser order, or such as have already been mentioned in the previous chapter, centred around the nobility and persons of position; so that their consideration can be deferred for the time being and be taken up in connection with the sports and pastimes of the ladies of rank, as treated in the chapter following.

Chapter VI

The Women of the Manors

VI

THE WOMEN OF THE MANORS

THE limited means of travel and communication caused the lives of the women of the early English manors to be secluded and, in a sense, protected the wives and daughters of the titled nobility. The manor house was a world to itself, a centre of law, of society, of industry, and, oft-times, of culture.

On account of the bad state of the roads and the lack of the modern convenience of quick transmittal of information, the turmoils and upheavals of the cities left the manors unaffected by more than a ripple of their excitement. The manor had its own social and administrative system, which provided for the performance of duties by the various elements of the manorial establishment. In times of wide social disorder, the manor, by reason of its isolation, was often subject to attack; then the courage and fortitude of its female occupants were called forth to the uttermost. Women whose names might otherwise have passed into obscurity have been enrolled among England's heroines by reason of just such circumstances; one such, whose fame carries us back to the Wars of the Roses, was Lady Joan Pelham, wife of Sir John Pelham, Constable of Pevensey Castle. While Sir John was in Yorkshire with the Lancastrian Duke Henry, fighting against Richard II., Pevensey Castle was fiercely attacked

by Yorkist forces. The continuance of the siege brought on a scarcity of provisions; in this strait, Lady Joan addressed a letter to her husband, which, besides displaying the courage of a noble English lady, has the additional interest of being the earliest letter extant written by an English woman of quality. It reads as follows:

"My Dere Lorde:

"I recommande me to yowr hie Lordeshippe wyth hert and body and all my pore myght, and wyth all this I think zou, as my dere Lorde, derest and best yloved of all earthlyche Lordes; I say for me and thanke yhow me dere Lorde, with all thys that I say before, off your comfortable lettre, that ze send me from Pownefraite that com to me on Mary Magdaleyn day; ffor by my trowth I was never so gladd as when I herd by your lettre that ye warr stronge ynogh wyth the grace off God for to kepe yow fro the malyce of your ennemys. And dere Lorde iff it lyk to your hyee Lordeshippe that als ye myght, that smythe her off your gracious spede whych God Allmyghty contynue and encresse. And my dere Lorde, if is lyk zow for to know of my ffare, I am here by layd in a manner off a sege, wyth the counte of Sussex, Sudray, and a greet parsyll off Kentte; so that I ne may nogth out, nor none vitayles gette me, bot wyth myche hard. Wharfore my dere if it lyk zow, by the awyse off zowr wyse counsell, for to sett remadye off the salvation off yhower castell & wt. stand the malyce off ther sehures foresayde. And also that ye be fullyehe enformede off there grett malyce wyker's in these schyres whyche yt haffes so dispytffully wrogth to zow, and to zowl contell, to zhowr men, and to zuor tenaunts ffore this cuntree, have yai wastede for a grett whyle. Farewell my dere Lorde, the Holy Trynte zow kepe fro zour ennemys and son send me gud tythyngs

off yhow. Ywryten at Pevensey in the castell, on Saynt Jacobe day last past.

"By yhowr awnn pore,

"J. PELHAM.

"To my trew Lorde."

While her position gave her equal rank with her husband, it also laid upon the lady of the manor the cares natural to her station. A great lady had always her bodyguard of maidens, and the lord his following of pages, these young people being thus provided for that they might receive the training of gentility and courtesy which were the essentials in the character of the noble persons of the times. These maidens, who were intrusted to the care of the lady of the manor, had to be trained in all domestic accomplishments as well as in polite attainments. It is singular that this custom of sending children from home was often interpreted by foreigners as an evidence of a lack of parental affection; and, indeed, it did at times furnish a means of easy riddance of daughters whose tempers were incompatible with those of their parents, or whose self-will—or the selfish policy of the household—made it desirable for the parents to sever the tie which lacked the strength of affection. Thus, in 1469, Dame Margaret Paston writes to her son, Sir John Paston, regarding his sister Margery: "I wuld ye shuld purvey for yur suster to be with my Lady of Oxford, or with my Lady of Bedford, or in sume other wurshepfull place, wher as ye thynk best, and I wull help to her fyndyng, for we be eyther of us werye of other."

It will be seen from this fashion of the times—more particularly of the latter part of the Middle Ages—that a knight's lady performed many of the functions of a mistress of a boarding school. Those intrusted to her care-

regardless of their rank or station, were subjected to rigid discipline and were required to perform the arduous duties of the household. These tasks embraced the varied forms of plain and fancy needlework, for every lady was expected to be proficient in such matters; all wearing apparel and fabrics of all sorts required for household use, and the banners and altar cloths of the churches as well, were made in the household. When the household was a large one, the lady and her maidens were kept busily employed in attending to its needs. It is, however, entirely probable that the manufacture of the coarser materials and their making into clothing were delegated to the servants, of whom every manor had a large retinue. The designing and making of the costumes of the wealthy—especially those that were to be worn on court and other high occasions—were given over to professional tailors, who were called "scissors."

The round of domestic duty made daily drafts upon the time of the wives. In every family of the higher class, the lady of the household had to see to the provisioning as well as to the clothing of its members and servitors. This was not a simple matter, as the provisions had to be supplied at the cost of great inconvenience, excepting in the case of the products of the manor farms belonging to the estate. The stewards' accounts are often a valuable source of information as to the grade of living of the times.

In view of the industry of the women in the manufacture of textile fabrics, the poet's eulogy is deserved:

> "Of gold tissues, and cloth of silk;
> Therefore say I, whate'er their ilk,
> To all who shall this story find
> They owe them all to womankind."

The limits of the manor formed the horizon of its women; the men frequently had to make long journeys in the

pursuit of their larger concerns, and were often in foreign lands serving as soldiers or crusaders. But the lack of variety in the lives of the women was more than compensated for by the opportunities which were furnished them by quiet and seclusion for the improvement of their minds and the cultivation of those finer qualities of character which are the basis of the refinement and good manners of the cultivated English women of the present day. It is not too much to say of the Middle Ages that without the peculiar circumstances of manorial living, the culture, confidence, self-containment, and initiative of the English woman would not have become as they are—her predominant characteristics. So effectual, indeed, were the conditions of the times for seclusion, and so greatly were its privileges appreciated, that it could be said of many a fine lady, as was asserted of Lady Joan Berkeley, that she never "humored herselfe with the vaine delightes of London and other cities," and never travelled ten miles from her husband's houses in Somerset and Gloucester.

The life of the manors was not, however, a round of tireless industry. The ruddy-cheeked, simple-minded English women of the better class were possessed of a redundant vitality and a fund of joyousness and humor which sought and found expression in a variety of healthful outdoor recreations, as well as indoor amusements. The pleasing art of letter writing had come to hold a position of interest in polite circles; for although the women may not have been skilled with the quill, their letters were nevertheless natural, simple, and sincere, and they were fairly proficient in the art of reading. Their religious duties occupied a part of each day, as did their visitation of the homes of the dependants on the estate; for it was the lady of the manor who was looked to by the poor for herbal medicines and such delicacies as were supplied to

the sick. Great ladies sometimes recognized their duties to the poor not only by giving individual doles, but by founding almshouses. Nearly every lady of distinction felt it incumbent upon her to do something for the relief of suffering and distress. It is especially pleasing to know that it was the women whose sensibilities were thus touched, and who were first influenced by the idea of social responsibility for the less fortunate classes of society. The records of the times abound with instances of benevolence in institutional forms. When it was impracticable for her to be her own almoner, the lady employed for the office a monk or a priest, and so associated her charities with the Church, by the teachings of which her impulses were trained. The saints' days were customarily observed by especial and important contributions for the poor.

Were it not for the manors, the Middle Ages would lack almost altogether poetry and literature other than that of the monkish chroniclers. Literature and poetry in this period were chiefly centred around the women of the nobility. It was probably due to the fondness of Henry I. for letters that a literary taste was excited among his queens. The earliest specimens existing of vernacular poetry are some verses addressed to Henry's second spouse, Adeliza. Feminine taste and royal patronage combined to free poetry from the pollution of the minstrel and his circle of vulgar auditors, to cause it to be cultivated by studious men and women, whose tastes had become refined by the study of the Latin classics, and who were themselves emulous of gaining a literary reputation by the cultivation of the art of serious composition.

Vernacular poetry, having the sanction and esteem of the higher circles of life, came to be generally appreciated; and the mind, which is naturally responsive to matters of

good taste, was willing to throw aside the incubus of low stories, dependent for their interest upon prurient situations, and to rise to the acceptance of literature whose interest centred around persons and situations that made their appeal by reason of worthiness or dignity. The patronage of letters by the nobility led many, especially ecclesiastics, to develop their talents in that direction. Wace, a canon of Bayeux and a prolific rhymester, expressly states that his works were composed for the "rich gentry who had rents and money." Even the stormy reign of Stephen seems to have been no impediment to the cultivation of the literary taste which had its beginning in the court of Henry I. and in the patronage of his queens. The vernacular histories were either written or rendered into the popular tongue, and in this way became the intellectual property of the female world; they were not infrequently inspired by the wish of some lady—a wish which became the law of the lay or clerical writer.

The story of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the unhappy queen of Henry II., who in her later life frequently signed herself "queen by the wrath of God," illustrates a phase of domestic infelicity which was not without many parallels. It also serves to show that, with the perfervid sentiment of chivalrous devotion to women, it was easy enough to forget the higher demands of faithfulness in the real relations of life. This queen herself was not blameless, and to an extent must be regarded as suffering the penalties of her own indiscretions. The story is almost too familiar to need reciting. She discovered that, although ostensibly Henry's wife, the position was really filled by one with whom the king had previously contracted marriage. The family of Rosamond Clifford was as respectable as and scarcely less illustrious than her own. During a sojourn at Woodstock, the jealous eye of the queen had

observed the king following a silk thread through the labyrinth of trees, by which means she came to know of her rival. The meeting of the two women can better be imagined than described: the queen poured out a torrent of reproaches and invectives, ending by offering to Rosamond the cup of poison or a dagger, and did not leave the place until the victim of her jealousy was no more.

But the tragic death of Rosamond did not serve to enlist for the queen the affections of her consort, nor did it tend to promote her domestic peace. Never was a family so torn by dissension and sin; her children were arrayed against their father and one another, and all were opposed to herself. Her husband added to her many troubles the further shame of installing in her place the wife of his son. Seeking release from a situation past all endurance, she eloped from a castle in Aquitaine, intending to find an asylum in the dominions of King Louis of France, her former husband. She was captured by Henry's myrmidons and thrown into prison, there to remain sixteen years until liberated by her renowned son, Richard Cœur de Lion. The sufferings of her life tempered her spirit and brought her into reliance upon religion for her comfort and strength.

Another example of the high courage and decision of purpose which the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine furnished in its later history is found at a subsequent period in another Eleanor, the daughter of Edward II. This patient, suffering wife, roused to indignant resistance of an unpardonable indignity, exhibited the spirit of an undaunted character. She had been married, at the tender age of fifteen, to the stern Reynald II., Earl of Gueldres and Zutphen. When the large dower she brought her husband had been spent by him, he sought pretext for a divorce from one with whom he could feel no sympathy; but for this her blameless life furnished no excuse.

Although the countess was constantly surrounded by spies and her every act and word reported to her lord, she moved with stately dignity in the atmosphere of intrigue and deceit. In default of any other plea, her husband represented to the pope that she was afflicted with leprosy. Arrayed solely in a tunic, and enveloping herself in a capacious mantle, she made her way with majestic mien into the council room of the palace, where the perfidious lord was in consultation with his assembled nobles about the details of the sinister purpose which he was seeking to effect. With the words, "I am come, my beloved lord, to seek a diligent examination respecting the corporeal taint imputed to me," she threw aside the mantle, disclosing the healthy texture of her skin, while a wave of emotion passed over her, and her eyes suffused with tears. "These," she continued, "are my children and yours; do they too share in the blemish of their mother? But it may come to pass that the people of Gueldres may yet mourn our separation, when they behold the failure of our line." Husband and nobles alike were profoundly affected by so sublime an appeal, and the royal pair were reconciled; but the male line of Reynald failed in his son, and the crown passed to the female branch, as though the almost predictive words of the noble English woman were destined to be fulfilled.

Yet another daughter of fair France became the queen of a Plantagenet. Richard II., the last Plantagenet, from the date of his accession, was involved in constant struggles, first with his Parliament, and then with Henry of Lancaster. His first queen, Anne of Bohemia, died in 1394. Richard's thoughts were thereupon directed to the necessity of choosing a second consort. He would consider only Isabelle of Valois, daughter of Charles VI., who was less than nine years old. The marriage was solemnized

by proxy, and arrangements were made for the king to repair to Calais and receive his child-bride at the hand of Charles VI. The preliminaries having been completed, the ceremony is thus recorded by Froissart:

"On the morrow, the King of England visited the King of France in his tent, where the kings sat apart at one table. During the serving of dinner, the Duke de Bourbon said many things to enliven the kings, and addressed the King of England: 'Monseigneur, you ought to make good cheer; you have all you desire and demand. You have, or will have, your wife, she is about to be given to you.' The French king then said: 'Bourbonnais, we could wish that our daughter were of the age of our cousin of Saint-Pol, although it should have cost us dearly, for our son of England would have taken her more willingly.'

"The King of England heard this and responded to the French king: 'Father-in-law, our wife's age pleases us well; we think less of that than we do of the affection between us and our kingdoms, for with mutual friendship and alliance, there is no king, Christian or other, who could give umbrage to us.' The dinner was soon over, and then the young Queen of England was brought into the king's tent, accompanied by a great number of dames and demoiselles, and given to the King of England, her hand being held by her father, the King of France."

This marriage brought nearly twenty years of peace between France and England. The young queen was carefully nurtured and educated by King Richard, whose attachment to her soon grew very deep. Turbulent factions disturbed Richard's rule, and Isabelle had always before her the menace of a prison rather than the prospect of a throne. Before leaving to quell a rebellion in Ireland, Richard visited his "little queen," for thus she was popularly styled, at Windsor Castle, to take farewell. This

interview, at which it is said the young queen first realized how deeply she loved the king, was to be their last. Henry of Lancaster, taking advantage of Richard's absence to gather a force to wrest the sceptre from him, met Richard on his return, made him captive, and finally secured his resignation of the crown in 1399. Simultaneously, the young queen fell into Henry's power, and was moved from castle to castle at the will of Henry. All this time she was kept in ignorance of the fate of her husband, and tortured by suspense and anxiety. Richard alive was too serious a danger to Henry's supremacy, and, a plot to restore him to his throne having failed, he was killed at Pontefract Castle soon after, in a heroic struggle against the myrmidons of Henry.

Meantime, the "little queen" had joined in the movement against Henry, in the hope that her husband would recover his crown and be restored to her, but she was soon again a captive at Havering Bower. For some time the child-widow—she was not yet thirteen—was kept in ignorance of the death of Richard. Soon, however, she was importuned by Henry IV. on behalf of Monmouth, his son, but, faithful to the memory of Richard, she rejected with horror the proposed union. Finally, all hope of the alliance being destroyed, Henry consented to Isabelle's return to her parents. She had endeared herself to the hearts of the English by her graces, and especially by her steadfast devotion to Richard.

After Isabelle's return to France, Henry still persisted in suing for her hand, but it was impossible to move her determination. In 1406, it seemed that joy might yet brighten the life of this unfortunate princess, for in that year she was betrothed to her cousin, the young Charles of Orléans, whom she married in 1409. The affection of husband and wife appeared to offer every prospect

of happiness, but she was permitted to enjoy her newly found state for only a brief period, as she died during the following year, a few hours after the birth of an infant daughter. The memory of this sweet but unfortunate princess is enshrined in the poetic tributes of the Duke of Orléans, nor did the English fail to sing in ballads her praise.

The origin of the Order of the Garter is traceable to the spirit of chivalry; it was instituted by Cœur de Lion, and in 1344 was revived by Edward III. Froissart appears to credit the story which connects the revival of the order to Edward's passion for the Countess of Salisbury, whose garter he is said to have picked up and presented to her in the presence of the court, with this exclamation: *Honi soit qui mal y pense!* The chronicler gives us a full account of the attachment of Edward for the countess, and places in excellent light the integrity of her character. When she was besieged in her husband's castle at Wark, Edward advanced to her relief, compelling the Scots to retreat. At the interview which followed, the king looked upon her with such an air of profound thoughtfulness that she was led to inquire: "Dear sire, what are you musing on? Such meditation is not proper for you, saving your grace." "Oh, dear lady!" replied the monarch; "you must know that since I have been in this castle, some thoughts have oppressed my mind that I was not before aware of." "Dear sire, you ought to be of good cheer, and leave off such pondering; for God has been very bountiful to you in your undertakings." Whereupon the king replied with more directness: "There be other things, O sweet lady, which touch my heart, and lie heavy there, beside what you talk of. In good truth, your beauteous mien and the perfection of your face and behavior have wholly overcome me; and my peace depends on your accepting my

love, which your refusal cannot abate." "My gracious liege," the countess exclaimed, "God of his infinite goodness preserve you, and drive from your noble heart all evil thoughts; for I am, and ever shall be, ready to serve you; but only in what is consistent with my honor and your own."

The first chapter of the Garter was graced by another queen who adorns the history of England's women of rank—Queen Philippa. She was attended by the principal ladies of the court, who, with herself, were admitted dame-companions of the order, and the wives of the knights continued to enjoy this dignity during several succeeding reigns.

In even the best homes of the Middle Ages we must not expect to find the refinements which are regarded as the commonplaces of modern life. The essence of refinement is the same in all ages, and, while it involves manners, these change with the standards and conventions of different times. Much that is amusing, absurd, or even disgusting, as we regard manners to-day, was entirely in good form during the Middle Ages. It will be of interest to notice some of the things which were regarded as commendable in the deportment of the young ladies of the aristocratic class of mediæval society, and what they were cautioned to avoid. A *trouvère* of the thirteenth century, named Robert de Blois, compiled a code of etiquette which he put in French verse under the title, *Chastisement des Dames*. The young ladies who would deport themselves in an irreproachable manner must avoid talking too much, and especially refrain from boasting of the attentions paid to them by the other sex. They were recommended to be discreet, and, in the freedom of games and amusements, to leave no room for adverse criticism of their actions. In going to church, they were not to trot or run,

but to walk with due seriousness, with eyes straight before them, and to salute *debonairely* all persons they met. They were enjoined not to let men kiss them on the mouth, as it might lead to too great familiarity; they were not to look at a man too much unless he were an acknowledged lover; and when a young woman had a lover, she was not to talk too much of him. They were not to manifest too much vanity in dress, and to be entirely delicate in the matter of costume; nor were they to be too ready in accepting presents from the other sex. The ladies are particularly warned against scolding and disputing, against swearing, against eating and drinking too freely at the table. They were exhorted not to get drunk, a practice from which, they were advised, much mischief might arise. That the restrictions were, on the whole, sensible is apparent from our statement of them, and the good sense of the times receives special point from the rule of society which recommended the ladies not to cover their faces when in public, as a handsome face was made to be seen. An exception is made in the case of ugly or deformed features, which might be covered. Another rule was as follows: "A lady who is pale-faced or who has not a good smell ought to breakfast early in the morning, for good wine gives them a very good color; and she who eats and drinks well must heighten her color." Anise seed, fennel, and cumin were recommended to be taken at breakfast to correct an unsavory breath, and persons so affected were told not to breathe in other persons' faces.

A special set of rules was given for the lady's behavior while in church, and if she could sing she was to do so when asked and not require too much pressing. Ladies were further recommended to keep their hands clean, to cut their nails often, and not to suffer them to grow beyond the finger or to harbor dirt. When passing the

houses of other people, ladies were not to look into them: "for a person often does things privately in his house, which he would not wish to be seen, if anyone should come before his door." For the same reason a lady was not to go into another person's house, or into another's room, without coughing or speaking to give notice to the inmates. The directions for a lady's behavior at the table were also very precise. "In eating, you must avoid much laughing or talking. If you eat with another (*i. e.*, in the same plate, or of the same mess), turn the nicest bits to him and do not go picking out the finest and largest for yourself, which is not courteous. Moreover, no one should eat greedily a choice bit which is too large or too hot, for fear of choking or burning herself. . . . Each time you drink, wipe your mouth well, that no grease go into the wine, which is very unpleasant for the person who drinks after you. But when you wipe your mouth for drinking, do not wipe your eyes or nose with the table-cloth, and avoid spilling from your mouth or greasing your hands too much." Added to these directions for deportment, particular emphasis was laid on the avoidance of falsehoods, which suggests the prevalence of the vice.

The modern "servant question" was not without its counterpart in the Middle Ages. We find instances of advice tendered upon the subject to the ladies of those times. An early writer on domestic economy divided the servants who might be found in a manorial establishment into three classes: those who were employed on a sudden and only for a certain work, and for these a previous bargain should be made regarding their payment; those who were employed for a certain time in a particular description of work, as tailors, shoemakers, butchers, and others, who always came to work in the house upon materials provided there, or the harvest men for the gathering of

the crops; and domestic servants who were hired by the year, these latter being expected to pay an absolute and passive obedience to the lord and lady of the household and any others who were set in authority over them.

Naturally, it was the female servants who came under the supervision of the lady of the house, and minute directions are given for their ordering. She was to require her maids to repair early in the morning to their work; the entrance to the hall and all other places by which people enter, or places in the hall where they tarry to converse, were to be swept and made clean, "and that the footstools and covers of the benches and forms be dusted and shaken, and after this that the other chambers be in like manner cleaned and arranged for the day." After this, the pet animals were to be attended to and fed. At midday the servants were to have their first meal, which was to be bountiful, but "only of one meat and not of several, or of any delicacies; and give them only one kind of drink, nourishing but not heady, whether wine or other; and admonish them to eat heartily, and to drink well and plentifully, for it is right that they should eat all at once, without sitting too long, and at one breath, without reposing on their meal or halting, or leaning with their elbows on the table; and as soon as they begin to talk or to rest on their elbows, make them rise and remove the table." After their "second labor" and on feast days also—when seemingly the workday was not so long as usual—they were to have another lighter repast, and in the late evening, after all their duties were performed, another abundant meal was served. It then devolved upon the lady of the house or her deputy to see that the manor was closed, and to take charge of the keys, preventing anyone from going in or out; and then, having had all the fires carefully "covered," she sent the servants

to bed and saw that their candles were extinguished to prevent the risk of fire. The lady was always careful as to whom she received into her house as servitors; female servants who came to her as strangers were not well regarded, and were not given trusts of importance, and their characters, so far as was possible, were looked into, as well as the circumstances of their leaving their former place of employment.

The term "spinster," which is now confined to unmarried women, was a term of consideration applied to all women of the better class during the Middle Ages. It was indicative of her superior rank, and was especially adhered to by gentlewomen who married out of their station, as a sign of their good birth and gentle breeding.

The term "gentle blood," as now understood, means only that some persons have the fortunate circumstance of refined parentage or ancestry; but in the Middle Ages, when the pride of gentle blood was one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the prevailing feudal society, it was seriously believed that through the whole extent of the aristocratic classes there ran one blood, distinguishable from the blood of all other persons. So strongly was this view entertained, that it was commonly thought that if a child of gentle blood should be stolen or abandoned in infancy, and then bred up as a peasant or a burgher, without knowledge of its origin, it would display, as it grew toward manhood, unmistakable proofs of its gentle origin, in spite of education and example. Whatever the fallacy of this belief, its effect upon the ladies of superior birth was to make them prize their station highly; but it also created a spirit of haughtiness toward those who were below their station, and a harshness in their relation to their domestics which was not always conformable to the graciousness and consideration which these very ladies

often displayed where there was no question involving their caste.

In considering the dress of the women of the Middle Ages, we remarked upon the censure and sarcasm which were passed upon the vanities into which women were led by their devotion to the changing fashions of the day. Every class of society was pervaded by a love of dress, which expressed itself in the greatest extravagances and absurdities. A knight of the fourteenth century compiled for three young ladies, the daughters of a knight of Normandy, a manuscript which contains advice and directions for the regulation of their conduct through life. It contains several very curious passages relative to dress: "Fair daughters," says their mentor, "I pray you that ye be not the first to take new shapes and guises of array of women of strange countries." He then inveighs against the wearing of superfluous quantities of furs as edging for their gowns, their hoods, and their sleeves. After commenting upon the sinfulness of useless fashions and their effect upon the lower classes, he proceeds to portray the absurdities into which the latter were led by aping their betters, and suggests that the furs which they wore in profusion had better at least be dispensed with in summer, as they served only "for a hiding place for the fleas." The knight whose daughters are thus counselled is unable to deter them from falling into extravagances of attire, and has recourse to the legend of a chevalier whose wife was dead and who made application to a hermit to know if her soul had gone to Paradise or to punishment. The holy man, after long praying, fell asleep, and saw the soul of the fair lady weighed in the balance, with Saint Michael standing on one side and the Devil on the other. The latter addressed Saint Michael and claimed the woman as his own on the score that she had ten diverse gowns, and

a less number than that would have sufficed to lose her soul; besides which, with what she had wasted she might have clothed two or three persons who for the lack of her charity died of want. So saying, the fiend gathered up all her gay attire, ornaments, and jewels, and cast them in the balance with her evil deeds, which determined the balance against her, and he bore her away to the lake of fire. The same night, in order to deter his daughters from painting their faces, the knight recounts a horrible legend of a fine lady who was punished in hell because she had "popped and painted her visage to please the sight of the world."

It is not by such incidentals as dress, but by the enduring qualities of character, that the women of the higher circles of the English Middle Ages were able to make an indelible impress upon the life and character of the nation. And more especially may this be said of the women whose lives were largely spent in the sheltered circle of a pure domesticity,—the women of the manors.

Chapter VII

The Women of the Monasteries

VII

THE WOMEN OF THE MONASTERIES

In general, the routine of the nunnery was the same as that of a monastery. There was the same rotation, hour by hour, of sacred services, with monotonous regularity and repetition; the only variety offered was that of labor of one sort or another, with brief intervals for rest and refreshment. The industry of the nuns usually took the form of working in wool, for it devolved upon them to make the clothing of the monks, who were associated with the convents to perform the outdoor labor and to serve as confessors for the female inmates. Great care was necessary to prevent too close proximity of the nunneries and monasteries and to limit the intercourse of the inmates of the respective institutions to the bare necessities of their mutual dependence.

The rules by which women were governed in the life of the convent did not differ much from those for the men. Some of these regulations were very rigorous: the inmates were to have nothing of their own, nor were they allowed to go out of the convent, and they were permitted the luxury of a bath only in time of sickness. Continual silence, frequent confessions, a spare diet, and hard labor were to be endured uncomplainingly, on penalty of excommunication.

In the fifth century, prohibitions were issued proscribing the founding of any more monasteries for monks and

nuns together and ordering the partitioning of those which already existed. No man excepting the officiating clergy, the bishop, and the steward of the convent was allowed to enter within its walls; and, indeed, one of the rules enjoined that the nuns were to make confession to the bishop through the abbess. Under no pretext whatever were the nuns to lodge under the roof of a monastery, nor was any person who was not a monk or a cleric of high repute to be allowed within the precincts of the convent on temporal business; but in spite of the many rules by which they were hedged about, in the eighth century nuns are found admitted into the monasteries on the ground of the necessity for their presence in sickness and similar emergencies.

Besides the nuns, strictly so called, in the eighth and subsequent centuries there were canonesses, who differed from the nuns in retaining more of their secular character. Their vows were not perpetual, and they confined their labors chiefly to the instruction of the children of the nobles.

Having cited some of the rules for the government of those who committed themselves to the life of the nun, it now remains to perform the delicate task of showing the degree of success which attended the attempt to isolate a class of unmarried women, that, by religious offices and meditations, they might wholly dedicate their time and their faculties to the cultivation of the Christian graces, and serve as the benefactresses of the poor in giving alms at the convent gate. The century that witnessed the outbreak of the Reformation is commonly regarded as exceptional for laxity of religious principle and perversion of the institutional ideals of the Church; but, from the eighth century, the ecclesiastical morality was of such a low order as seriously to affect the moral tone of the people and to invalidate the efficacy of the Church as a

teacher of religion. The celibacy which was enjoined upon the clergy was largely responsible for this state of affairs. It is unfortunately not true that the ages of faith, so called, were ages of great moral purity. In spite of the interdict of councils, priestly marriages were looked upon as common events. The marriage of priests being under the ban of the Church, concubinage was regarded as almost a legitimate relationship, and carried less of stigma than the proscribed marriages. It is not singular that such impairment of moral ideas was not confined to the priests, and that the same low moral tone invaded the convents, many of whose inmates became the partners of the priests in their derelictions.

"The known luxury and believed immoralities of the wealthy monasteries" in England, says Sharon Turner, "made a great impression on the public mind. Even some of the clergy became ashamed of it, and contributed to expose it, both in England and elsewhere." Nor was the tone of morals outside the cloister of higher grade than that of the monks. In 1212 a council commanded the clergy not to have women in their houses, nor to suffer in their cloisters assemblies for debauchery, nor to entertain women there. Nuns were ordered to lie single. In England, these and many other moral prohibitions were repeated at various intervals, showing that, in spite of the prevailing corruption, there was an appreciation of pure ideals; and in its councils the Church took cognizance of and endeavored to stem the rising tide of unchastity. Thus, inquiries were made in 1252 as to whether the clergy frequented the nunneries without reasonable cause, and a year or two afterward an inquisition was made all over England into the character and actions of the various religious personages. The conduct of the nuns is frequently alluded to in terms of the severest censure, while

the ecclesiastics were enjoined not to frequent taverns or public spectacles, or to resort to the houses of loose characters, or to visit the nuns; they were not to play at dice or improper games, nor to leave their property to their children. The vices of the clergy were the unavoidable consequence of the independence of their hierarchy from civil control. The release of the clergy from secular jurisdiction was productive of much personal depravity. They had to fear their abbot only, and he was frequently a mild censor of their morals. At a time when any profligate woman of position might retire to a convent and, by elevation or appointment, become abbess, it is not strange that the moral tone of the convent was not determined by the rules of the order, but by the standards which were actually established.

Yet, in spite of many instances of reprehensible conduct, the nuns as a class did not break the vows that bound them to chastity, and within the convent walls were found many examples of women of illustrious character. In the Anglo-Saxon times, women of the most admirable traits are found in charge of convents; the names of some of the abbesses of the seventh century, and earlier, are notable as those of women of high rank as well as of high character. Saint Werburga of Ely, the daughter of Wulfere, King of Mercia, was made ruler over all the female religious houses, and became the founder of several convents of note. Her qualities and character were set forth in the following lines:

> "In beaute amyable she was equall to Rachell,
> Comparable to Sara in fyrme fidelyte,
> In sadness and wysedom lyke to Abygaell:
> Replete as Deibora with grace of prophecy,
> Æqyvalent to Ruth she was in humylyte,
> In purchrytude Rebecca, lyke Hester in Colynesse,
> Lyke Judyth in vertue and proued holynesse."

But such examples of high worth among the abbesses, while not exceptional in the early Middle Ages, are not frequently met with in the closing centuries of the period.

The position of the abbess was not one of honor only, but of privilege; the cloister rule was relaxed for her—she might go and come as she pleased, and see anyone whom she wished to see. In the early times, she is even found taking part in synods. Thus, in 649, the abbesses were summoned to the council at Becanceld, in Kent, and the names of five of them were subscribed to the constitutions which were there made, while the name of not a single abbot appears on the document. Coming down to much later times, abbesses were summoned to attend or to send proxies to the king's council which was held to grant "an aid on the knighting the Prince of Wales." Also, they were required to furnish military service by proxy. While they were more amenable to the clergy than were the monks, the abbesses were nevertheless tenacious of their privileges. They were never ordained, nor did they ever have the right to ordain others, although they claimed the latter as one of their privileges.

They were subject to deposition if they abused their office. Not infrequently the nuns would carry their complaints to the bishop, and seek from him redress for their grievances. If the circumstances warranted his so doing, the bishop would occasionally take the direction of the nunnery into his own hands instead of appointing an abbess, or else he might place it temporarily in the charge of one or more of the nuns. All the affairs of the convent were directed by the abbess—the tillage of the grounds and the repairs to the buildings, as well as the internal ordering of the establishment and the discipline of its inmates. Also, she was directed to assist, by her own labor as far as she was able, in clothing herself. When a

nun became refractory, she might be consigned to punishment outside of the convent. Thus, by the decree of a council near Paris in the eighth century, it was ordered that the bishop as well as the abbess might send a nun to a penitentiary. The same council prescribed that an abbess should not superintend more than one monastery or quit its precincts more than once a year. One of the rules which was at one time in force prohibited abbesses from walking alone, thus placing them under the surveillance of the sisterhood. But their powers varied according to the period and the order with which they were connected.

Through the necessities of their office, the abbesses were brought into closer relationship with the outside world than were the other nuns. Sometimes they were made respondents in a suit at law with regard to the estates of the convent, or to retain the property brought to them by some one of the sisters, who, renouncing her vows, sought to recover her possessions. In 1292 the prioress of an abbey in Somersetshire had to answer in a suit brought against her by a widow and two men in regard to the right of common pasturage upon lands held by the convent, and the case was decided against the religious house; but both the prioress and the widow escaped paying their respective costs in the case, on the plea of poverty.

Not only were the abbesses sued, but they themselves did not hesitate to institute legal proceedings in defence of what they believed were their rights. In the reign of Edward III., a prioress sued a sheriff for the recovery of a pension granted during the reign of Henry III., which had been allowed to lapse. The case was carried to the king's court and won for the convent. Legal difficulties frequently occurred over grants made to convents without

the observance of the set formalities. An abbess had a great many secular duties, for all the money that came into the establishment, or was paid out, had to be accounted for by her. The entertainment which the convent dispensed to those who, on one pretext or another, claimed it, furnished another occasion for the intercourse of the abbess with the outer world. Sometimes ladies who were temporarily in want of a home repaired to a convent and were there received. The bishops frequently sent friends to the priory for entertainment; though such persons were charges upon the hospitality of the institution, they, as a rule, either paid for their entertainment themselves or were provided for by their friends. It was not unusual for visitors who came under the authority of the bishop's order to bring with them a retinue of servants and to remain a considerable time.

During the time of Henry VIII., rigid inquiries were made with regard to the regulations and the character of the inmates of the monasteries, especially the abbots and abbesses. The investigations with regard to the character of the abbots and abbesses need not concern us, as we have sufficiently noticed the looseness of conduct which prevailed in many of the religious houses. Among the questions asked were inquiries as to whether hospitality was maintained, and especially toward the poor, whether Church anniversaries were observed, whether proper records were kept, whether any of the conventual property had been alienated, whether the head of the house was given to sober and modest conversation both toward the inmates and lay persons, whether any of the inmates had been punished, whether there had been any overlooking of the faults of a brother or sister through favoritism, whether any novices were received before reaching sufficient age because of friendship and affection or the inducement of money or

any other ulterior reason. Besides these inquiries, which were common to the abbots and abbesses, particular questions were asked the latter, looking to the abandonment of all ornaments and superfluities of dress and the keeping in good repair of all the accessories of divine service. They were asked whether the sisters attended divine worship at the proper seasons, whether they taught the novices the rule, whether they maintained proper oversight of them, and whether they saw that they were engaged at proper work. Also, the abbess was to report on the character of the nuns as to whether she suspected any of incontinence, whether any of them slept without the convent walls or walked abroad, and, if so, in whose company. She was asked whether the confessor or chaplain did his duty, and whether she had found any "ancient, sad, and virtuous" woman as mistress of the novices.

Among the Gilbertine nuns, whom we may mention as a typical order, there were three prioresses, one of whom presided, the other two acting as coadjutors. It was the duty of the presiding prioress to enjoin penance, grant all the licenses or allowances, visit the sick, or see that they were visited by one of her companions. The prioresses cut, fitted, and superintended the manufacture of the vestments of the sisters. It was the duty of the presiding prioress to visit the sisters in the infirmary whenever they asked for her presence, unless she were detained by urgent duties. Other rules regulated her conduct on festival days, when she was especially to use diligence in inquiring after the order and religion of the house.

The sub-prioress was under more rigid rules than those which governed her superior; if, in the absence of the prioress, she spoke of anything excepting labor, she confessed having done so, in the chapter. If, in the absence

of the prioress, some other of the sisters failed to observe silence, it was not she but the sub-prioress who was held responsible and took the blame. She could not go to the window of the gate without a "sage companion."

When the cellaress assumed office, her duties were to see what was owing to the different farmers and tax gatherers, to receive the sums due from the collectors on the nunnery estates, and to take account of all the sales of the products of the lands of the convent. Also, she was to see to the provisioning of the house, to pay the wages, and to attend to the mowing of the hay and to the repairs to the buildings. She might have associated with her a lay sister, with whom she was at liberty to talk concerning the business affairs of their office.

Of the other convent officials, the precentrix had charge of the library; the sacrist rose at night to ring the bell, attended to the adornment of the church in the vigil of Easter, lighted the lamp in the interval at lessons, had the preparation of the coals for the censer, and performed other duties of a like nature; and the duty of the mistress of the novices was to see that those in her charge behaved in an orderly manner. She was the disciplinarian of those who had not taken the full vows of the order. If the infirmaress desired anything, she had to indicate it by a sign; when the want was of such a nature that it could not be so indicated, the cellaress was summoned, for this was the only official in whose presence the infirmaress could speak. She never served in the kitchen when there were any serious cases of sickness to need her attention. There were other officials who performed special or occasional duties, who need not be mentioned. All the servants in a convent took an oath of fidelity not to reveal the secrets of the house. They were brewers, bakers, kitcheners, gardeners, shoemakers, and the like.

The confessor made periodical visits to the convent; and if the prioress found it necessary that anyone should confess, the latter was told to go to the place appointed, and two "discreet sisters" sat apart from the window of the confessional, where they could hold the nun under observation and see how she behaved. The confessor also was under supervision as to his conduct, for he was to "shun talking vain and unnecessary things; nor ask who she was, whence she came, and such things."

The ceremony with regard to the taking of vows by the nuns was threefold. The first was called the consecration of the nun, and was made on solemn days, preferably Epiphany or on the festivals of the Virgin. After the Epistle was read, the virgin who was to be consecrated came before the altar, dressed in white, carrying in her right hand the religious habit and in her left an extinguished taper. After the bishop had consecrated the habit, he gave it to her, saying: "Take, girl, the robe which you shall wear in innocence." After assuming this, the taper in her hand was lighted, and she intoned the words: "I love Christ, into whose bed I have entered." Then, after the Epistle, Gospel, and Creed, the bishop said: "Come, come, come, daughter, I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The nun then prostrated herself before the altar, and after the *Veni Creator* began, she arose. The bishop then invested her with the veil and pronounced a curse against all those who would disturb her holy purpose. The second ceremony related to a nun who was to make profession, but who had before been blessed, and the third ceremony related to the consecration of a nun who was not a virgin. Such, in brief, is a sketch of the convent routine and exercises. It will now be in place to take a more general view of the nun's environment.

As the hospitality of the convent was often extended to strangers, it will not be without interest to give a list of the contents of a chamber which was allotted to a "Dame Agnes Browne" in the Priory of Minster, in Sheppey: "Stuff given her by her friends:—A fetherbed, a bolster, 2 pyllows, a payre of blankatts, 2 corse coverleds, 4 pare of shets good and badde, an olde tester and selar of paynted clothes and 2 peces of hangyng to the same; a square cofer carvyd, with 2 bed clothes upon the cofer, and in the wyndow a lytill cobard of waynscott carvyd and 2 lytill chestes; a small goblet with a cover of sylver parcell gylt, a lytill maser with a brynne of sylver and gylt, a lytill pese of sylver and a spore of sylver, 2 lytyll latyn candellstyks, a fire panne and a pare of tonges, 2 small aundyrons, 4 pewter dysshes, a porrenger, a pewter bason, 2 skyllotts (a small pot with a long handle), a lytill brasse pot, a cawdyron and a drynkyng pot of pewter."

That, in the mind of the religious recluse, cleanliness was not associated with godliness was due to the idea of penance. Washing was regarded as a luxury not to be indulged in excepting at infrequent intervals or by special permission. This idea of ablutions was probably derived at first in reaction from the public baths which were so much in vogue among the Romans, and which were associated in the public mind with luxury, and were often the scenes of conduct quite at variance with the principles for which the nuns stood. The licentiousness which centred around these places brought them into such ill repute that to the ascetic mind washing did not so much signify cleanliness as sin. The virtue of dirt did not extend to the abbesses, who were allowed to wash whenever it was necessary and as frequently as they pleased. By a similar process of deduction, the nuns remained untonsured. In the early times, a woman whose hair was cut short

was looked upon as a disreputable character, so that it was repellent to conventional ideas of propriety to conform to the practice of the monks in having the head shaved.

The nuns were not always of the most serious disposition and deportment, as is shown by the peculiar enjoinment that they were not to look fixedly on any man, or to romp or frolic with him; neither were they to allow any man to see them unveiled, nor to embrace any man, either an acquaintance or a stranger. The convivial nature of some of the nuns is revealed by an order commanding them not to "use the alehouse or the watercourses where strangers daily resort, or bring in, receive, or take any layman, religious or secular, into the chamber, or any secret place, day or night, or with them in such private places to commune, eat, or drink, without license of your prioress." The monastery which is described by Wriothesley as the most virtuous religious house in England, Sion Monastery, was under an even stricter rule. Conversation with secular persons was permitted only by the license of the abbess from noon to vespers, and only then on Sundays and the great feast days of the saints. Sion Monastery was subjected to the further restriction that the nuns might not receive their friends, but could converse with them by sitting at appointed windows, in the presence of the abbess. If any sister desired to be seen by "her parents or honest friends," she might, by the special permission of the abbess, open the window occasionally during the year; but if she had the self-denial to forego this privilege, a greater reward was assured her in the hereafter.

Despite the criticism to which the monastic system of the Middle Ages may justly be subjected, it would be great remissness to fail in appreciation of the tremendous work of civilization which was performed by its expositors.

They were the centres of culture, as well as of benevolence; in the convents, and also in the monasteries, there could always be found a select library, which included works of the classic authors, as well as books of religion. The nuns, as a class, were well educated for their time. They could read Latin, and were qualified to direct the education of the novices who came under their training. Even in the ninth century, some of the continental convents had such high repute as educational centres that children were sent long distances to get the benefit of the opportunities they offered; and in this respect England was no whit behind, for children were sent from the continent to be educated in the schools established by Theodorus and Hadrian. This fact is the more to the credit of the English schools, as the tide had been setting strongly in the other direction.

The addition of literary and pedagogic duties to the religious routine and manual labor of the convents made the lives of the nuns extremely busy, for, in addition to their reading theological and classical literature, they had the duty of copying and embellishing manuscripts. It was not unusual for a nun to become proficient in Latin versification and to correspond in that language with others of a similar literary taste and training. These women were thus often highly qualified to teach the subjects which were then included in polite education. For many centuries theirs were the only schools for girls. The suppression of the convents was, educationally, a disaster to England. They were not merely schools for book learning, but such little knowledge as was current in regard to the treatment of various disorders and the care of the sick was obtained in the convent schools. The general custom of bleeding people for every form of illness, as well as to prevent possible sickness, made necessary some kind of

bandage ready prepared to apply to the wound, and it was a common practice for nuns to make such bandages and to present them as gifts to friends. The convent pupils were also taught the finer sorts of cooking, such as the preparation of special dishes and the making of sweetmeats and pastry. Needlework, as the most characteristic employment of women of refinement, music, both vocal and instrumental, and writing and drawing, entered into the curricula of the convents.

The educational record of the various convents at the time of their suppression shows that this act of Henry VIII., whatever other justification it may have had, cannot be supported on the ground that the convents were not performing a useful service to society in the education of the youth of the country. Gasquet, in his *Suppression of the Monasteries,* says: "In the convents, the female portion of the population found their only teachers, the rich as well as the poor, and the destruction of the religious houses by Henry was the absolute extinction of any systematic education for women during a long period." Thus, at Winchester Convent the list of ladies being educated within the walls at the time of the suppression shows that these Benedictine nuns were training the children of the first families in the country. Carrow, in Norfolk, for centuries gave instruction to the daughters of the neighboring gentry; and as early as A. D. 1273 a papal prohibition was obtained from Pope Gregory X., restraining the nobility from crowding this monastery with more sisters than its income would support. Again, we read of Mynchin Buckland that it was a noted seminary for the daughters of the families in its vicinity. Many families whose names were the highest in the list of the English gentry of the day owed to the convent systems all the accomplishments which enabled them to shine brilliantly in their after life.

"Reading, writing, some knowledge of arithmetic, the art of embroidery, music and French, 'after the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,' were the recognized course of study, while the preparation of perfumes, balsams, simples, and confectionery was among the more ordinary departments of the education afforded." There was as great protest aroused among the laity against the suppression of the convents as has been latterly witnessed in France against the rigid enforcement of the law as to unregistered schools, resulting in the closing of many schools which were established on a religious foundation and taught by the nuns.

Many pathetic pleas were addressed to Thomas Cromwell in behalf of the convents at the time of the Reformation. The abbess of the famous convent of Godstow, in Oxfordshire, wrote to Cromwell as follows: "Pleaseth hit your Honour with my moste humble dowyte, to be advertised, that where it hath pleasyd your Lordship to be the verie meanes to the King's Majestie for my preferment, most unworthie to be Abbes of this the King's Monasterie of Godstowe. . . . I trust to God that I have never offendyd God's laws, neither the King's, wherebie this poore monasterie ought to be suppressed." She then continues in an earnest strain to set forth that the recommendation for the suppression of her convent arose from private malice on the part of her enemies, and closes with a denial of the charges preferred, as follows: "And notwithstanding that Dr. London, like an untrew man, hath informed your Lordship that I am a spoiler and a waster, your good Lordship shall know that the contrary is trew; for I have 'not alienated one halporthe' of goods of this monastery, movable or unmovable, but have rather incres'd the same, nor never made lease of any farme or peece of grounde belonging to this House, or thet hath

been in times paste, alwaies set under Convent Seal for the wealthe of the House."

The convents were charitable as well as educational centres, although their benevolent methods would not meet the approval of modern ideas as to wise almsgiving. At the set time for the disbursement of alms, the mendicants thronged the institution, and, by the liberality of the donors, were encouraged to continue in a life of shiftlessness and beggary. The disbursement of alms was really regarded by the recipients not so much as an act of charity as something which they had a right to expect.

One of the best phases of conventual charity was its influence in developing the benevolent tendencies of women of position and means. The feudal system, as we have seen, was largely a system of dependent relations, so that those who were in the lowest social scale felt that they had a right to the gifts of those who were above them. By the inevitable working of the system, the lives of the poor were interwoven into the lives of their betters. It was a gracious work of the Church to teach those who were in the fortunate places of life their responsibility toward their less happily situated fellow creatures, and the monastic almsgiving was a practical exemplification of the spirit of the Gospel in so far as the customs and practices of the times made possible a clear interpretation of its benevolent teachings. Although charity was not organized, and was dealt directly to the needy without investigation of their claims on any other ground than actual and manifest want, and thus was in violation of modern social tenets and methods, it yet furnishes one of the most engaging chapters of mediæval life. Modern benevolences, however different from those of earlier times, nevertheless derive their spirit and inspiration from the gracious charities of the mediæval nuns.

Under the incentive of the example of the monasteries, the great ladies recognized and frequently performed their full duty toward their dependants. The Countess of Richmond maintained a number of poor people within her own walls. In the sixteenth century, Lady Gresham left, by her will, tenements in the city, the rents of which were to be used for the poor. The Countess of Pembroke built an almshouse and procured for it a patent of corporation. These are but a few of many illustrious examples of large charities which serve to brighten the pages of mediæval history.

In the Middle Ages, charity was a personal obligation. With the elimination of personal service, charity came increasingly to be dispensed by voluntary associations. Of such organizations may be instanced the Sisters of Charity and, in recent years, the various orders of deaconesses. For although charity has gone outside the bounds of the Church, its ministrations are directly traceable to the convents, and it yet finds its most appropriate relations and allies to be religion and the Church.

Chapter VIII

The Women of the Industrial Classes

VIII

THE WOMEN OF THE INDUSTRIAL CLASSES

THE most remarkable fact of the twelfth century in England was the growth of the towns. As has been already observed in a previous chapter, the conquest of Britain by the Normans modified the insularity of the people and brought them into closer communication with the people of the continent. One of the most marked effects of this change was the introduction into the country of skilled Norman craftsmen. The stimulating effect of the influx of these specialized workmen was in result not unlike the general awakening of trade and commerce throughout Europe, at a later time, as the result of the Crusades.

The expansion of England's industry was also favored by the vigorous administrations of Henry I. and Henry II. Another contributive factor was the decline in power of the barons. Henry I. pitted the town against the castle in order to counterbalance the vast influence which was exerted by each. Henry's policy of limiting the independence of the barons was furthered by the introduction of scutage, by which the king was enabled to call to his aid mercenary troops and did not have to rely wholly upon the feudal forces. Then, too, the Assize of Arms restored the national militia to its former importance. Such, in brief, were the constitutional measures by which the towns

were advantaged and their position as related to the castles in a sense reversed. The liberty of the latter became increasingly curtailed, while that of the former was correspondingly augmented.

The town and the castle, however, were not antagonistic, the interests of the former being furthered by the protection of the latter. The monastery, also, aided the town by attracting trade. There was little difference in conditions of life between the town and the country; both engaged in agriculture as well as in trade, and both were governed by a royal officer, or, it might be, by some lord's steward, while, of course, the houses were somewhat more clustered in the town than in the country, and the town possessed the merchant guild. It is impossible to trace guilds to their origin, although Brentano seeks to fix England as their birthplace. This is possible, however, only by narrowing the definition of a guild to fit the English type.

The earliest unmistakable mention of the merchant guild is at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century. Under Henry I., grants of merchant guilds appear in royal town charters, and are frequently met with during succeeding reigns. By such charters the original voluntary associations became exclusive bodies, to which trade was confined. The retail trade of the town was restricted to members of the guild individually, while the trade coming to the town was shared by them all collectively. The burgesses generally found it to their interest to become members of the guild, and all townsmen of importance were traders. Ecclesiastics and women might also be members of the guild, but they were, of course, debarred from becoming burgesses.

The exclusive tendencies which the merchant guild developed made it really an oligarchy, and so there grew up

in the towns an ever increasing population that did not share the guild privileges. As the town and its trade developed, the complexity of trade regulations made it a convenience to have guilds with specialized functions, to which the merchant guild might deputize its powers. It was quite natural, too, that men working at the same trade, and having social and neighborhood association, should desire to have a guild which would represent their distinctive interests. Thus the craft guild arose, not in antagonism to the merchant guild, but as a special agent of it. So, in the reign of Henry I., there came about the associations of the weavers, cordwainers, and fullers. By the end of the fourteenth century craft guilds were numerous, and in some places the merchant guild was superseded by them. In their composition the guilds were made up of masters, journeymen, and apprentices, from whom were elected the officers and assistances. Women were members of these craft guilds, although they do not appear to have taken part in the business administration. "The charter of the Drapers speaks of both brethren and sistren, and the list of members as given on the occasions of 'cessments' shows women-members, both wives of combrethren, independent tradeswomen, and widows of deceased brothers."

The relation of the women to some of the guilds seems to have been largely a social one. Thus, we read in the rules of the Calendar Guild, a religious fraternity, that the wives of guild members had gone to such extremes in their entertainment of the guild as to cause it to be stipulated that no woman should spend in excess of a certain specified sum for hospitality toward the guilds; for these guilds were formed for various purposes besides trade, and were in the nature of friendly societies. In addition to their commercial side, they were "associations for mutual

help and social and religious intercourse amongst the people." The proportion of women in the membership was always large. In her introduction to *English Guilds,* Miss Toulmin Smith says that "scarcely five out of five hundred were not formed equally of men and women. . . . Even where the affairs were managed by a company of priests, women were admitted as lay members, and they had many of the same duties and claims upon the guilds as the men."

Women's association with the guild was not a merely nominal one, for they shared in all of its privileges and contributed to all of its funds, although the payments asked of them were sometimes smaller. The female as well as the male members had a right to wear the livery of the guild. Women were engaged in trade and even in manufacture, and so had direct interest in the craft guilds, aside from that which they would naturally feel through the relations thereto of their husbands and brothers. In the work of his trade a member was always allowed to employ his wife, his children, and his maid, for the whole household of the guild brother belonged to the guild. In later times this led to the degeneration of the guilds into mere family monopolies.

The fraternal feature of the craft guild reminds one of the same features of the benevolent orders of the present time. If a member of the guild, male or female, became impoverished through mishap, they were cared for, and, if need arose, were buried; dowerless daughters were provided with marriage portions, or, in case they wished to enter the religious life, they were provided with the means to do so. Nor must we overlook the large influence which the guilds exerted on the side of morality, attaching, as they did, the greatest importance to the moral character of their members.

The great Drapers Company embraced in its membership many women who trained apprentices and carried on business, as did the male members. The rules of the company provided that "every brother or sister of the fellowship taking an apprentice shall present him to the wardens, and shall pay 13/4." The craft guilds exerted an admirable influence in the raising of woman to the same plane of respect as that held by men. The equality which was accorded them in these associations amounted to a recognition of their intellectual and business capabilities as being of the same order as those of the men. The respect which was shown them is illustrated by a provision of the same company to which we have just referred. It was ordered that when a "sister" died she should be interred with fullest honors; the best pall was to be thrown over her coffin, and the fraternity were to follow her to the grave "with every respectful ceremony equally as the men." On the death of a male member of a guild, his widow was privileged to carry on his trade as one of the guild; and if a woman married a man of the same trade who did not have the freedom of the guild, he acquired it by virtue of the marriage; but should a woman marry a man of another trade, she was thereby excluded from her guild connection. Such were the relations of woman to the guilds. But Brentano notes an exception to the rule that a widow who married again a man of the same trade conferred the freedom of the guild upon him: "The wife of a poulterer may carry on the said mystery after the death of her husband, quite as freely as if her sire were alive; and if she marries a man not of the mystery, and wishes to carry it on, she must buy the (right of carrying on the) mystery in the above described manner; as she would be obliged to buy the mystery, if her husband was of the mystery and had not yet bought it; for the husband

is not in the dominion of the wife, but the wife is in the dominion of the husband."

The democratic nature of the guilds tended to lessen class distinctions and to bring about a true fellowship on the plane of equality. The associations, as has been said, provided for their members with loving care, and followed them with love to the grave: "the ordinances as to this last act breathed the same spirit of equality among her souls on which all her regulations were founded, and which constituted her strength." In cases of insolvency at death, the funerals of poor members were to be respected equally with those of the rich. "The honor paid to the dead was also associated with the duty of benevolence;" thus, for instance, in the statutes of the fullers of Lincoln, it is said: "When any of the brethren and sistren die, the rest shall give a halfpenny each to buy bread to be given to the poor, for the soul's sake of the dead." The Grocers Company admitted women after marriage to membership in their fraternity, and they "enter and are looked upon as of the fraternity for ever, and are assisted and made as one of us; and after the death of the husband, the widow shall come to the dinner and pay 40d. if she is able."

In the fourteenth century it was by no means unusual for women, even though they were married, to carry on successfully large commercial enterprises in their own name and by their individual effort. In the *Liber Albus of London,* which was compiled in the fourteenth century, there occurs an ordinance relating to this subject: "and where a woman *coverte de baron* follows craft within the said city by herself apart, with which the husband in no way intermeddles, such woman shall be bound as a single woman as to all that concerns her said craft. And if the husband and wife are impleaded in such case, the wife

shall plead as a single woman in the Court of Record, and shall have her law and other advantages by way of plea just as a single woman. And if she is condemned, she shall be committed to prison until she shall have made satisfaction; and neither the husband nor his goods shall in such case be charged or interfered with." It will be seen from this that women were accorded wide liberty in the conduct of business and, whether married or single, preserved their independence of action and control of property. The right that woman enjoyed before the courts of being sued and of suing was, however, a negative one.

The distresses to which women were subjected by the peculiar form of liberty which they enjoyed is illustrated by the following quotation from an enactment in the Statute of Laborers in the reign of Edward III: "Every man and woman of our realm of England, of what condition he be, free or bond, able of body and within the age of threescore years, not living in merchandise, not exercising any craft nor having of his own whereof he may live, nor proper land about whose tillage he may himself occupy, and serving any other, if he be in convenient service (his estate considered), be required to serve, he shall be bounden to serve him which so shall him require. . . . And if any such man or woman being so required to serve will not the same do, . . . he shall be committed to the next gaol, there to remain under strait keeping, till he find surety to serve in the form aforesaid."

All of the oppressive enactments regulating the wages of laborers and fixing the maximum of the sum that they were at liberty to accept affected women equally with men. An enactment of Richard II. provided "that no artificer, labourer, servant, nor victualler, man or woman, should travel out of the hundred, rape, or wapentake where he is dwelling, without a letter-patent under the

King's seal, stating why he is wandering, and that the term for which he or she had been hired has been completed." Otherwise the offender might be put in a pair of stocks, which was to be provided in every town.

The guild system, despite its attitude toward women, was the beginning of the narrowing of her industrial sphere. Prior to the importation of skilled laborers in textile and other branches of industry, such activities were identified with the homes of the people, not merely in that the industry itself was conducted in them, but that the product was limited to the needs of the household, the demands of charity, and such surplus as was used in trade. The guild broadened the meaning of industry to meet the demands of a rising commercial system whose trade routes became clearly established and extended throughout Europe and into the East. So that, while the industry of the women artificers became limited in that many things which had largely occupied their hands became the settled occupations of men, the products which still depended mainly upon their industrial activity became much more widely dispersed, and made them factors in the developing industries to which England is so deeply indebted for her trade supremacy. With the decline of guilds, there was a return on a very large scale to the system of home industry, when every farmstead and rural cottage became a manufacturing centre. The development of the factory system of the eighteenth century, upon the introduction of improved machinery for manufacture, completely removed industry from the home and created the modern factory town.

It is not our purpose to do more than suggest the influence which the guilds exerted in bringing woman into the larger stream of English life by the definition of her legal status which her industrial consequence and activities

made necessary. It has been already remarked that the statutes of the times made her personally responsible before the law as an industrial factor. In this way, woman became increasingly regarded as a social integer rather than as simply a domestic incident. This was a distinct gain in the end, however crude the conception at first. The complex questions of woman's social status are still largely centred about the question of her industrial place. The insistent claim of the sex that they shall be regarded as worthy of a part in the world's work projects into the discussion of the place that she shall occupy many other questions concerning matters which are immediately involved. It is not too much to say that all of the issues which arose during the modern period, and together form the specifications of the platform of "woman's rights," find their beginning in this first responsible relation of woman to the industry of the nation. Society is established upon an economic basis, and so the problem of the duties and responsibilities of woman in a public way must be centred about industry. It will not do to criticise the crudeness of the early legislation regarding woman when she first stepped into the arena of associated industry, and to remain oblivious to the fact that the question of her industrial status is no more satisfactorily determined after the lapse of centuries. It is true that the question during these centuries became greatly involved at times, as, for instance, at the period of the great industrial revolution; but, with all the aspects which the question assumes to-day and the problems which are related to it, the crux of the matter is the same as it was at the time of the rise of the guilds.

The guild ordinances took the view of woman as an industrial unit, without regard to her personal relations. If she became a merchant and associated herself with the

guild, she was under the same laws regarding financial responsibility as was any other member. The fact that she was a woman, or that she was married and had children, did not constitute a plea in her behalf for different treatment from that accorded a guild brother. If a woman-merchant became a debtor, she had to answer in court as any other merchant, and "an accyon of dette be mayntend agenst her, to be conceyved aft^r the custom of the seid lite, w^t out nemyng her husband in the seid accyon."

The legislation of the period generally recognized the equality of the sexes in the matter of labor. An ordinance of Edward IV., made in the borough of Wells, provided that both male and female apprentices to burgesses should themselves become burgesses at the expiration of their term of service. Similar statutes relating to apprentices in London likewise made no distinction between boys and girls. The problems centring about woman's relation to industry not having arisen, the fact of her employment presented no serious difficulties. When the proclamation of 1271, relating to the woollen industry, was issued, it permitted "all workers of woolen cloths, male and female, as well of Flanders as of other lands, to come to England to follow their craft." Indeed, the women were less fettered than the men in their industrial avocations, for, while by the statute of 1363 the men were limited to the pursuit of one craft, women were left free in the matter.

In this connection, it is interesting to refer to the development of the silk industry as a typical occupation of woman. It is impossible to determine the time when "the arts of spinning, throwing, and weaving of silk" were first brought into England. We do know, however, that, when first established, they were pursued by a company of women called "silk women." The fabrics of their skill

were in the many forms of laces, ribbons, girdles, and other narrow goods. Toward the middle of the fifteenth century, these women were greatly distressed by the Lombards and other Italians, who imported into the country the same sort of goods, and in such quantities that their sale was hindered and the workers placed in danger of starvation. This led to a reference of their complaint to Parliament, with a statement of the grievances for which they desired redress. This document bore the title: *The petition of the silk women and throwesters of the craftes and occupation of silk-work within the city of London, which be, and have been, craftes of women within the same city of time that no man remembereth the contrary.* The petition then goes on to set forth "that by this business many reputable families have been well supported; and young women kept from idleness by learning the same business, and put into a way of living with credit, and many have thereby grown to great worship; and never any thing of silk brought into this land, concerning the same craftes and occupations in any wise wrought but in the raw silk alone, unwrought, until now of late that divers Lombards and others, aliens and strangers, with a view of destroying the silk-working in this kingdom, and transferring the manufactories to foreign countries, do daily bring into this land," etc. Then follows a statement of the inferior grades of fabrics thus introduced, which the complaint said was "to the great detriment and utter destruction of the said craftes; which is like to cause great idleness among the young gentlewomen and other apprentices to the same craftes." The petition that the importation of these goods should be prohibited was granted, and we hear no more of these estimable ladies and little of their infant industry. It was then thought no disgrace for a lady of quality to conduct such household manufactories.

The town-dwelling woman looked down upon her rural sister, a fact that is not at all surprising when the difference in the condition of the two classes of women is considered. The town-dwelling woman had the privileges of guild association and the liberties which it gave her, while the woman in the agricultural districts was but a drudge. The former were identified with manufactures and commerce, while the latter were tied to the soil. Even after the rise of copyhold tenure of land, the grievances of the agricultural population were considerable, and of many sorts. While the villains flocked to London to demand legal exemption from the old labor obligations which went along with such servile condition, the cottars claimed freedom from labor rents for their homes, and the copyholders of all kinds demanded that they should not be compelled to grind at the lord's mill the corn which they raised for their household needs. The rising tide of industrial revolution represented a climax of centuries of grievance; and when the revolt did come, it was as a demand for the manumission of property held in villanage. There was at the time hardly any personal servitude demanding such strenuous measures for betterment. The popular agitation seemed to be enlisted against class impositions, and so the following lines:

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

became the slogan of the insurgents.

It is not possible to ascertain how particular grievances in Kent and Essex became identified with the general movements of the peasantry south of the Thames and in many parts of the midland. The vast movement, however, extended throughout the agricultural districts, and included burgesses of towns, rural priests, yeomen,

and farm laborers. It is unlikely that a personal grievance should have caused it, but it was precipitated by such. The immediate occasion was the indignation which was aroused at an outrage committed by one of the tax collectors on the daughter of Wat the Tyler. As the indignation which centred in the sentiment against this act served to cement the feeling of injustice which was prevalent among the peasantry, so it is probable that the act itself was not a solitary instance, but only one of many indignities which were suffered by the peasantry at the hands of the representatives of those above them. Although the insurrection soon came to an end, and those who were responsible for it suffered the severest penalties, nevertheless the various "statutes of laborers" which from this date appear on the statute book show that the day had gone by when the lords of manors could require the personal services of tenants in return for the lands they held; so that the one thousand five hundred persons who were executed for this social uprising died as a protest against grievances of the poor tenantry, which were corrected by legislation.

By the close of the fourteenth century the manorial courts had lost much of their former vigor; and there were frequent instances of villain tenants sending their daughters to service beyond the bounds of the manors, in spite of the requirement of a license so to do. Daughters were also married without reference to the lord, or obtaining his permission, or paying the fee. As a result of their extended liberties, women as well as men deserted the country in large numbers and resorted to the towns. The population thus became much more mobile, and among the people there was a wider degree of intelligence because of this fact and of their more varied experience. As women are the progenitors of the race, it is always

important for the intelligence of a people that the mothers shall not be stupid and inane creatures such as were for the most part the women of the agricultural classes in England during the greater part of the Middle Ages. They were limited to the narrow confines of homes, humble indeed, and yet homes which they could not feel were their own, and they could not leave these habitations excepting under conditions which were practically prohibitive. Their days were spent in an unvarying monotony of domestic duties and farm labor, which afforded no stimulus to the mind or food for the soul. It is not strange that morals were as depraved as manners were uncouth. In the imagination, superstition took the place that was unoccupied by intelligence; and the world of the peasant woman, who went about her round of daily hardship, was peopled by a throng of supernatural creatures, and her life spent in fear of violation of some of those strange rules of conduct which now form interesting matter for the student of folklore.

It is difficult to exaggerate the hardship of the agriculturist of the Middle Ages; and as she was an active participant in such labors, besides having upon her the burdens which commonly belong to the mother of a household, the woman of the times had to bear duties much beyond those of a woman in a similar grade of life in England to-day. The great pestilences of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries swept away so many lives that, for two centuries and a half before the accession of Henry VII., the growth of population was so slight as to be scarcely calculable. The unsanitary condition of the homes in general was greatly injurious to health; but this was especially so of the homes of the humble, the women of which had no ideas of cleanliness, either in person or surroundings. The weekly shilling or ninepence of the agricultural laborer must have been distressingly inadequate for the

needs of the household. These included wheat or rye, which formed the staple of living, the rent of the cottage, the usual manor dues, the national tax, something for clothing, medicine for the children, and occasional items which would enter into a complete enumeration. Even if the wife, as was frequently the case, had to bear the burden of her own support by engaging in some form of industrial activity in connection with her other duties, the wage of the husband was barely enough to meet the needs of the remainder of the family, and he had not a farthing left for "rainy days," which were of frequent occurrence, or for those common and extraordinary exactions which could not be evaded. So rigidly were the taxes levied, even upon the poorest, that every form of possession came under tribute; thus, the pet lamb of a poor man, which may have been the one source of joy to his children and pleasure to his wife, appears in an inventory of Colchester as amerced for sixpence. In the fifteenth century, to which this entry refers, the master of a tenant was forbidden by the Statutes of Laborers to assist him by relieving his poverty; and even in case of illness of his wife or children, the master could not legally furnish him aid. So onerous was the income tax, levied to meet the expenses of foreign wars, that it was not uncommon for bequests of money to be made for the relief of the poor in paying it. The laborer had attached to his cottage a small piece of ground, which his wife and himself tilled; he might also feed his goose or his sheep upon the manor waste, but only on the sufferance of his master.

By the end of the fifteenth century the lot of this class of England's population became almost unendurable. The women, who bore more than their share of the burden of work in an attempt to provide the bare necessities of existence, were bowed under a weight of misery which made

that existence endurable only because they knew of none better, or none which could possibly come within the range of their narrow hopes. The wretched condition of life among those whose possessions were so limited is well summed up in the following quotation from an article by Dr. Augustus Jessup in the *Nineteenth Century,* February, 1884; he says: such people "were more wretched in their poverty, incomparably less prosperous in their prosperity, worse clad, worse fed, worse housed, worse taught, worse tended, worse governed," than the peasants of the present day; "they were sufferers from loathsome diseases their descendants know nothing of; the very beasts of the field were dwarfed and stunted in their growth; the death rate among children was tremendous; the disregard of human life was so callous that we can hardly conceive it; there was everything to harden, nothing to soften; everywhere oppression, greed, and fierceness."

Although wages were higher by the end of the century, reaching fourpence a day, meat, cheese, and butter were much dearer than at its beginning, so that it is doubtful if the last of the century found the condition of the laborer at all improved in this respect. As labor was suspended on the holidays of the Church and for a half-day on the eves of those holidays, and as the laborer was forbidden to receive more than a half-day's wage every Saturday, the men and women most anxious to work, even if they could obtain constant employment, could not average more than four and one-half profitable days per week. It is not surprising that, for want of nutrition, there was throughout the Middle Ages a wide prevalence of fever, the large death rate of women and children from this cause affording evidence of their physical weakness.

The wage of women employed in agricultural labor in the first half of the fourteenth century was at the rate of

a penny a day, although this was not uniform; and in some parts of the kingdom they received considerably more. Their duties on the farm consisted, in part, in "dibbling beans, in weeding corn, in making hay, in assisting the sheep shearers and washing the sheep, in filling the muck carts with manure and in spreading it upon the lands, in shearing corn, but especially in reaping stubble after the ears of corn had been cut off by the shearers, in binding and stacking sheaves, in thatching ricks and houses, in watching in the fields to prevent cattle straying into the corn, or, armed with a sling, in scaring birds from the seed or ripening corn, and similar occupations. That they might not fail of employment to fill up the measure of the hours, there was the winding and spinning of wool to stop a gap." But these were not the sole employments of the wives and daughters of the mediæval farmer, for they took their part in all farmwork together with their husbands and fathers. After the "black death" had made such terrible inroads upon the rural population of England, a woman received a wage that seldom went below twopence for a day's work; but this amount was diminished by the effect of one of the Statutes of Laborers, which required that every woman not having a craft—that is, not a town dweller, nor possessed of property of her own—should work on a farm equally with a man, and, like the man, she should not leave the manor or the district in which she customarily lived, to seek work elsewhere. It was difficult for a woman of the agricultural classes to pass out of the dreary sphere in which she lived, for it was enjoined that if a girl before the age of twelve years—significant of the time when she was supposed to be a woman—put her hands to works of industry, she must remain for the rest of her life an agricultural laborer, and was not permitted to be apprenticed to learn a trade.

These regulations were, of course, very often honored in the breach, but nevertheless they were frequently enforced.

The poverty of the peasantry made it necessary for them to make for themselves almost everything that entered into the needs of their life,—their houses, their clothing, their agricultural implements, and most of their household articles. Flax was raised, and from it the women manufactured the linen for the ladies of the hall; from hemp they made the coarse sackcloth for their underclothing, and they spun and wove the wool shorn from the backs of their few sheep for their outer clothing. The women of this class frequently could not afford an oven of their own, and so the flour which was made from the grain that was required to be ground at the lord's mill was also baked in his oven. The simple medicines were brewed by the housewife from the herbs which grew by the copse side or on the commons or in the ditches. When the manufacture of wool and flax was withdrawn to the towns, the labor of the women was to that extent lightened, although their income was correspondingly lessened.

The condition of the very poor was pitiful in the extreme; as there had been no opportunity for the laying up of provision for old age, the only recourse for the women and men alike, when indigency and age overtook them, was to seek shelter in the almshouses which had been founded for the decrepit and the destitute. Many yielded to their "miserable cares and troubles," and died from starvation. By the fifteenth century the monasteries had ceased to be important centres for the dispensing of charity, so that relief from destitution could not be looked for from that source. The conventual orders, in common with the rest of the nation, had become burdened with debt through the wars at home and abroad. The numerous

regulations for the control of beggars, and the licenses which were issued to regulate the practice, show the great prevalence of real poverty and want during the whole of the fifteenth century, although throughout the Middle Ages mendicancy was familiar enough.

Such was the condition of the women of the industrial classes during the Middle Ages. The period that witnessed the transition from the Middle Ages into modern times, the breakup of feudalism, and the construction of society upon a different basis, was, as transitional periods are apt to be, one of peculiar stress. And as this period in England was marked by severe wars, with all the blight and desolation which they bring to a land, it was one of especial severity upon those who had to bear the burden of such undertakings. Not only was the standard of living brought low, and the comforts of life reduced to the bare necessities, but manners were as disastrously affected as was the economy of the realm. Crime and violence stalked through the country, seemingly under no restraint; and from the prevalence of deeds of violence, it is very clear that law was not only ineffectual, but that public sentiment was not strong enough to create a better state of affairs. The condition was not unlike that which prevailed in Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Women were the chief sufferers from the prevalent lawlessness. They were seized at night, and, after being dishonored, were compelled to go to the church, where the priest, under threats and despite the protests of the victims, performed the ceremony which linked them to their captors. It mattered little if the woman happened to be already married, as such proceedings were supposed by many to constitute a sufficient divorce. Rent riots were of everyday occurrence, and murders were not unusual. It was not altogether the poor who were involved in such deeds of

violence, as there were among them agitators from the upper classes, who not only urged them on, but themselves took part in all such outrages. Often murders and other forms of violence grew out of the practice of men of quality having about them bands of retainers who were frequently the roughest of characters, including men under indictment for capital offences. No class was quite secure from the disorderly elements of the population, but the women of the country districts were more frequently the sufferers than were their sisters of the towns.

The great increase of sensuality, the low esteem in which women were held, and the little regard they manifested for their own characters, showed the decadence into which the spirit of chivalry had fallen. Being a child of feudalism, with the decay of that system it went into eclipse. Nevertheless, chivalry contributed to English life real benefits, apart from the elevation of women, and these remained permanent factors in the character of the nation.

Chapter IX

The Women of the Transition Period

IX

THE WOMEN OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

THE authorities upon whom we depend for information as to the condition of the industrial classes—particularly the agricultural—during the fifteenth century are in such hopeless conflict that it is impossible to do more than follow the views of some one of them, with such modifications and checks as may be reasonably introduced from the others. The picture already drawn of the utterly miserable condition of the peasantry during that century is not ratified by all the writers, and yet the interpretation of the data, conflicting as it is, must lead to the conclusion that the condition of that class of English society was far from being roseate, and that, in the main, it would be difficult to overdraw the misery which existed; but this condition was ameliorated to some extent by the introduction into rural districts of domestic manufactures, after the decay of agriculture. The compensation that accrued to the peasantry by a growth in the clothing trade counterbalanced, in a measure, their other losses, while it also brought the rural districts into industrial relation with the towns and aided in bridging the chasm between the two. The industry was of a nature to enlist the activities of the women of the households and to bring them into contact with the commercial life of the nation, in a lesser degree than their sisters of the craft guilds, it is true, but still in

a way that had an important bearing upon the industrial history of the country.

The Wars of the Roses, which had been so destructive to the nobility, and the tendency of the crown to depend upon the gentry as a balance to the power of the feudal barons, aided in making more certain and rapid the advance of the middle class. The style of living is a sure index of the degree of prosperity; there was a great increase in the number as well as in the size of the houses which ranked in importance between the castle of the baron and the cottage of the peasant. Also, we meet with a change for the better in the equipment of such houses. Instead of a few pieces of furniture, rude and primitive, it is not unusual in the inventories of this time to find complete suits of furniture for the various rooms of the house. All of the country gentlemen and more prosperous burghers possessed quantities of plate. The custom of having but one bedroom, or two at most, and obliging guests and servants to sleep in the great hall or in rude shacks temporarily erected for their accommodation, was no longer common in this class of society. With the increase of the number of rooms in the houses, the importance of the hall diminished. Town and country houses alike were now generally built around an interior court, into which the rooms looked, and the windows opening upon the street and country were small and unimportant. This was not simply an architectural change, but was due to the necessity of studying security on account of the disturbed state of society. Men were beginning to appreciate good houses, and the women had greater resources in the way of household utensils and furnishings, particularly in those pertaining to the kitchen. The glittering rows of pewter and plate were a source of great satisfaction to housewives, and were largely depended upon to establish their

claim to social distinction. The art of making bricks, which had been lost since the departure of the Romans from Britain, was revived, and the establishment of brick-kilns stimulated building. By the end of the fifteenth century, the domestic house was entirely differentiated from the castle. The materials for dwellings were of the sort readiest to hand. In the eastern counties, where clay was more abundant than stone, bricks were commonly used, while elsewhere the houses were built of stone or wood.

The dwellings of the fifteenth century were commodious and convenient. A typical country house may be described as follows: a door on the ground floor led into the hall, while a staircase on the outside led to the first floor proper. Inside the door at the head of the stairs was to be found a shorter staircase, which led to the floor on which were situated the chambers. Passing into the hall, the visitor would find himself in the most spacious apartment of the house. It remained as it had been throughout the Middle Ages, the public room, open to all who were admitted within the precincts of the establishment. The permanent furniture consisted chiefly of benches, and a seat with a back to it, which was used by the superior members of the family. In the hall there was usually at least one table which was a fixture, but the other tables continued to be made up from planks and trestles when needed. Cushions and ornamental cloths to place over the seats and backs of benches were in general use, and on special occasions the tapestries, some of which had been in the families for generations, were brought out, though apparently they were not used on ordinary occasions. The sideboard was one of the most familiar articles of furniture, and upon it was arranged the plate, which was in charge of the butler, and was intended as much for display as for use. In the large mansions, as in the

castles, the hall was not complete without the minstrels' gallery and a dais; though inconveniently large, it was well warmed and lighted, and the walls were often decorated with stags' antlers on which to hang the men's hats and caps, hunting horns and such accessories of the chase, beside which were suspended arms and armor and fishing nets; while on the sideboard might be found writing materials and a book or two. The fresh rushes with which the floor was strewn gave forth, when first placed, a refreshing smell when crushed by the foot.

The setting of the table was much the same as it had been. Knives were not ordinarily placed upon it, because of the custom of the times for each person to carry his own knife. Salt was regarded with superstition, and it was thought desirable that it should be placed upon the table before other comestibles. There was little attempt to keep the tiled floor clean except by strewing it with rushes, and for guests or members of the household to throw bones or other débris of the table upon the floor was not looked upon as an offence against manners; indeed, dogs were almost invariably present, and awaited, as customary, their meals at the hands of the guests. However, the directions for behavior at table instructed the person not to spit upon the table, by which intimation it was delicately hinted that the proper place upon which to expectorate was the floor. Again, the guest is told that when he makes sops in the wine, he must either drink all the wine in the glass or else throw it on the floor. The uncleanliness of the seats is also suggested by the instruction given the learner in etiquette that he should always first look at the seat before occupying it, to be sure there was nothing dirty upon it. Table manners had lost some of their ceremony, but had retained all of their rudeness. Forks were not used to convey food to the mouth, fingers answering

every purpose, but it was considered bad manners to eat with a knife. Other rules for the table are curious enough, but are also important as illustrating the manners of the century. Some of them are too disgusting to mention; others, not open to this objection, may be instanced. The guest was directed not to dip his meat in the saltcellar to salt it, but to take a little salt with his knife and put it on his meat, not to drink with a dirty mouth, not to offer another person the remains of his pottage, not to eat too much cheese, and to take only two or three nuts when they were placed before him. Still other rules are not without point, such as not to roll one's napkin into a cord or tie it into knots, and not to get intoxicated during dinner time!

Let us now take a glance at the table service of a noble dame of the period, where the extreme of etiquette may be expected to prevail. The hunting horn having announced that the meal awaits the guests, squires or pages bear to them scented water for the customary ablutions. This is served in delicately wrought ewers, placed in silver basins. A further touch of delicacy to the repast is often provided by perfumed herbs scattered over the rich damask tablecloth. The guests are not inconvenienced by the crowding of decorative vessels on the board. The numerous courses are well served, for a superior domestic is charged with this duty, and he is assisted by two varlets. At the sideboard is a squire or page whose sole duty is to serve the wines and drinking vessels; he too is assisted by a varlet, who places them before the several guests. None of these attendants are required to leave the hall, to which the officers of the kitchen and the cellar bring the dishes and the wines. During the meal the gallery is occupied by the musicians, who, it is to be presumed, will serve to enliven the formalities attendant on the scene.

The parlor was a more pretentious room than the hall, and was ornamented with more care. While it was a usual feature of town houses of the period, it had been introduced so comparatively late that its final position in the plan of the house had not become fixed; sometimes it was upon the ground floor, and sometimes upon the floor above, while the larger houses had several such apartments. It had open recesses with fixed seats on each side of the window, and the fireplace was smaller and more comforting than those of the hall. When carpets came into use, the parlor was the first room to be treated to the luxury, and it had the additional distinction of being the only room that contained a cupboard. An inventory of the furniture of the parlor of a fifteenth-century house includes the following: a hanging of worsted, red and green; a cupboard of ash boards; a table and a pair of trestles; a branch of latten, with four lights; a pair of andirons; a pair of tongs; a form to sit upon, and a chair. It will be seen from this list that the furnishings for a parlor were not numerous, but they are suggestive of a degree of comfort greatly in advance of that of prior centuries. This paucity of household furniture did not arise so much from the inability to procure it as from the insecurity of the times. Margaret Paston, in a letter to her husband, written in the reign of Edward IV., says: "Also, if ye be at home this Christmas, it were well done ye should do purvey a garnish or twain or pewter vessel, two basins and two ewers, and twelve candlesticks, for ye have too few of any of these to serve this place; I am afraid to purvey much stuff in this place, till we be sure thereof."

Wall paintings had come into use in the houses of the better sort, and the hardwood finishings of the parlor and other important rooms displayed elaborate carvings and a massiveness and dignity of scheme. Among the newer

styles of chairs was one of the folding sort, which exactly resembled our camp stools. Griffins, centaurs, and the like were patterns for candle and torch holders, which were often of wrought iron of an elaborate design. The branch of latten with four lights, mentioned in the inventory quoted, referred to a sort of chandelier, holding four candles, which was suspended from the centre of the ceiling and was raised and lowered by means of a cord and pulley.

As the people began to lose taste for the hall, on account of its publicity, they gradually withdrew from it to the parlors for many of the purposes to which the hall had been originally devoted. The recess seat at the windows was the favorite place for the female members of the household when employed in needlework and other sedentary occupations, and the apartment was commonly used for the family meals. In a little treatise dating at the close of the fifteenth century, one of the speakers is made to say: "So down we came again into the parlor, and there found divers gentlemen, all strangers to me; and what should I say more, but to dinner we went." The table, we are told, "was fair spread with diaper cloths, the cupboard garnished with goodly plate." Also, the parlors relieved the bedchambers of many of the uses to which they had been put, and secured to them greater privacy. Largely because of the lack of any other place, ladies had been accustomed to receive their friends in their bedchambers, but now the parlor was used for a reception room, and there was spent much of the time which the female part of the family had previously passed in the bower or the chamber.

Young ladies of even the great families were brought up very strictly by their mothers, who kept them constantly at work and exacted from them an almost slavish respect. It appears from the correspondence of the Paston family,

to which reference has been made, that the wife of Sir William Paston, the judge, was a very harsh mother. Jane Claire, a kinswoman, sent to John Paston, the lady's eldest son, an account of the severe treatment of his sister Elizabeth at Mrs. Paston's hands. The young lady was of marriageable age, and a man by the name of Scroope had been suggested as her husband. Jane Claire writes: "Meseemeth he were good for my cousin, your sister, without that ye might get her a better; and if ye can get a better, I would advise you to labour it in as short time as ye may goodly, for she was never in so great a sorrow as she is now-a-days, for she may not speak with no man, whosoever come, nor even may see nor speak with my man, nor with servants of her mother's, but that she beareth her on hand otherwise than she meaneth; and she hath since Easter the most part been beaten once in a week, or twice, and sometimes twice in a day, and her head broken in two or three places. Wherefore, cousin, she hath sent to me by friar Newton in great council, and prayeth me that I would send to you a letter of her heaviness, and pray you to be her good brother, as her trust is in you." Elizabeth Paston's matrimonial desires were not realized at this time, as she was transferred from the household of her parents to that of the Lady Pole; this was in accordance with the custom which we have already noticed of sending away young ladies to great houses, where they received their education and served to fill up the measure of pride of the great lady to whose train they were attached. The larger the number of such maidens a lady could boast of, the greater was her importance; nor did she hesitate to accept payment for the board of those of whom she thus took charge, and from whom she derived further profit by employing them at lace making or other suitable work.

Young ladies were taught to be very demure and formal in their behavior in company, where they sat bolt upright, with their hands crossed, or in other constrained attitudes. In a poem, written about 1430, entitled *How the Good Wife Taughte Hir Dougtir,* we have the rules which were enforced upon girls for their conduct in society, and particularly the advice which was tendered the girl with regard to her marriage and her subsequent conduct. The love of God and attendance upon church were enjoined, and in the performance of the latter duty she was not to be deterred by bad weather. She was to give liberally to alms, and while in attendance upon divine service was to pray and not to chatter. Courtesy was recommended in all of the relations of life; and when the time came that she was sought in marriage, she was told not to look upon her suitor with scorn, whoever he might be, nor to keep the matter a secret from her friends. She was not to sit close to him, because "synne mygte be wrought," and a slander be thereby raised, which, she is informed, is difficult to still. She was counselled, when married, to love her husband and answer him meekly; she was to be well mannered, not to be rude, nor to laugh boisterously—or, to give it as it is expressed in the poem, "but lauge thou softe and mysIde." Her outdoor conduct also was regulated for her. She was not to walk fast, nor to toss her head, nor to wriggle her shoulders; she was not to use many words, nor to swear, for all such manners come to evil. She was to drink only in moderation, "For if thou be ofte drunke, it falle thee to schame." She was to exercise due discretion in all of her relations with the other sex, and to accept from them no presents. She was herself to work and to see that those under her were kept employed; to have faults set right at once, keep her own keys, and to be careful whom she trusted. If her children

gave her trouble and were not submissive, she must not curse or scold them, but "take a smert rodde, and bete them on a rowe til thei crie mercy." Besides all these enjoinments, she was impressed with the duty of benevolence, and was to act as physician to all those about her.

The position of woman at this time was clearly defined. Certainly the woman of the middle classes had taken her proper place in society. She did not disdain to look after the affairs of her establishment, nor was this regarded as in any way derogatory to her dignity; and this was also true of women in the highest rank. It is said that, as a rule, the husband and wife were in full accord, and confided in one another upon terms of equality. The wife was careful of her charge at home, and heedful of her husband's purse; she generally made her own as well as her children's clothing, if the material were to be had. No wife of to-day could show greater solicitude for the comfort and well-being of her husband than did Dame Paston, the wife of John Paston, who in 1449 wrote to her husband a letter from which we may extract the following: "And I pray you also, that ye be wel dyetyd of mete and drynke, for that is the grettest helpe that ye may have now to your helthe ward."

The wife was the companion of her husband when he was at home, and in his absence entertained his guests with all the graces of hospitality. The duties of the day did not leave her a great deal of time for leisure, for, besides directing the conduct of the establishment and looking after her maidens, teaching them the arts of housewifery, spinning, weaving, carding wool and hackled flax, embroidery, and garment making, there were the pet birds and squirrels in cages to be looked after and fed. But life was not all labor, nor were the maidens of the household surfeited with instruction. In their periods of

relaxation, they danced, played chess and draughts, and read the latest thing in romances with as keen interest as the modern society girl evinces in the most recent novel. To be informed in all such matters was essential to the standards of culture of the day.

One of the pleasantest features of the country life of the period was the garden. The English women of to-day are no fonder of outdoor recreation and exercise than were their predecessors of the fifteenth century. Alone, or in parties of their own sex, or with male company, they wandered over the fields, gathering wild flowers and picnicking in the woods, spreading upon the grass their lunch of bread, wine, fish, and pigeon pies. They rode on horseback, and went hunting, hawking, and rabbit chasing. Their presence at the tournament gave it its greatest interest, and the successful contestants considered the awards that were made them by their ladies doubly valuable, as indicating at once their prowess upon the field and their conquests in that no less interesting sphere of sentiment where Cupid bestows the favors.

Perhaps at no other time in English history have ladies shown such fondness for pets as in the fifteenth century. There are frequent references to them in the literature of the day, and they appear in many of the illustrations; parrots, magpies, jays, and various singing birds are often mentioned among domestic pets. Various kinds of small animals were also tamed and kept in the house, either loose or in cages, squirrels being especially in favor because of their liveliness and activity. Gambling was one of the most popular vices of the day. It was not until after the middle of the fifteenth century that cards came into very general use, but by the beginning of the following century card playing had passed from the stage of fad and become a passion. After the table was removed, one

of the servants would bring in a silver bowl full of dice and cards, and the company would be invited to play. So general and widespread was the practice that early in the reign of Henry VIII. an attempt was made to restrict the use of cards to the Christmas holidays. Women were hardly less inveterate devotees of this and other games of chance than the men, although it is not to be concluded that they took such games as seriously or risked as large sums as did the other sex. Dinner was served at noon, and the games, along with dancing, usually occupied the time of the leisure classes until supper, which seems to have been served at six o'clock. There was, of course, no other form of amusement that was so well adapted to polite circles, or that could be participated in with as much pleasure by the ladies, as dancing. Many new dances had been introduced and become fashionable, and these were much more lively than those of the earlier period, some so spirited, indeed, as to scandalize the moralists of the time. After supper the amusements were resumed, and continued until a late hour, when a second, or, as it was called, a "rere-supper," was served.

After the members of the household and the guests were surfeited with amusements, or the lateness of the hour made sleep welcome, they retired to rest in the upper chambers. These bedrooms were much more private than they had formerly been. In the poem *Lady Bessy,* when the Earl of Derby is represented as plotting with Lady Bessy in aid of the Earl of Richmond, he tells her that he will repair secretly to her chamber:

> "'We must depart (separate), lady,' the earl said then;
> Wherefore, keep this matter secretly,
> And this same night, betwixt nine and ten,
> In your chamber I think to be.
> Look that you make all things ready,
> Your maids shall not our councell hear.

For I will bring no man with me
But Humphrey Brereton, my true esquire.'
He took his leave of that lady fair,
And to her chamber she went full light,
And for all things she did prepare,
Both pen and ink, and paper white."

The bedstead now came to be much more ornamental than in previous times. The canopy which had formerly adorned the head of this article of furniture was now usually enlarged so as to cover it entirely. It was often decorated with the arms of the owner, with religious emblems, flowers, or some other form of ornamentation. The bed itself consisted of a hard mattress, and was often made only of straw, although feather beds were used to some extent throughout the century. Chaucer describes a couch of unusual luxury as follows:

"Of downe of pure dovis white
I wol yeve him a fethir bed,
Rayid with gold, and right well cled
In fine blacke sattin d'outremere,
And many a pilowe, and every bere (pillow cover)
Of clothe of Raines to slepe on softe;
Him thare (need) not to turnen ofte.'

This description of a bed in the latter part of the fourteenth century holds good for the succeeding century, although the bed increased in luxuriousness of hangings. Feather beds and bed covers are frequently mentioned in the bequests of the times; by their description, they show the increase in the comfort and richness of beds, and, by their mention in wills, the value that was placed upon them. With the increase of privacy which the bedchambers afforded at this time, the practice of several people sleeping in the same room was less general.

The women of the manor house, who may be regarded as succeeding the women of the castles, were notable for

their intelligence, purity, and good sense, as revealed to us by the letters and literature of the times. Their features, as depicted in illustrations, give evidence of refinement and culture as well as beauty; to these attractions was added that of graceful carriage. Although their dresses fitted closely to the figure, tight lacing had not yet become the custom. Paris was then, as now, the glass of fashion for the women of Europe, and the English woman considered her form to approach perfection the more nearly as it conformed to the model established in France. At this period, the ladies were given to similar extremes of dress and adornment to those which have furnished an indictment against them since fashion first held sway over the feminine mind. All classes of society were influenced by the all-important matter of style, and the women of each grade of the social scale found their chief contentment in copying the manners and dress of those above them. Earlier we found occasion to notice, in brief, the sumptuary legislation by which it was sought to limit extravagances in fashion; but the laws have yet to be framed which can serve permanently to control woman's desires. So that we shall, perforce, have to continue our discussion of the evolution—or as the moralists of the Middle Ages would have expressed it, if they had possessed the facility of verbal coinage which is common enough with us, the "devilution"—of woman's attire, just as though law had never attempted its regulation.

The intricacies of the women's coiffure were many. The practice of dyeing the hair or otherwise altering its color is of ancient date. Among the Saxons and Normans it seems to have been confined to the men, for during those periods the women kept their heads so completely covered that there was no inducement for them to resort to such practices; but at the time of which we are now

treating the custom had some vogue among the ladies, although it does not appear to have become general until the reign of Elizabeth, when the ladies had reduced the art to such a nicety that they were able to produce various colors and, indeed, almost to change the substance of the hair itself:

> "Lees she can make, that turn a hair that's old,
> Or colour'd, into a hue of gold."

A religious writer of the fifteenth century, declaiming against the various adornments of the hair and the arts which were employed to stimulate its growth as well as alter its color, and against the practice of wearing false hair, says: "to all these absurdities, they add that of supplying the defects of their own hair, by partially or totally adopting the harvest of other heads." To point a moral, he then gravely relates an anecdote to the effect that during the time of a public procession at Paris, which had drawn a great multitude of people together, an ape leaped upon the head of a certain fine lady, and seizing her veil, tore it from her head; with it came her peruke of false hair, so that it was discovered by the crowd that her beautiful tresses were not her own; thus, by the very means to which she had resorted to attract the admiration of the beholders, she received their contempt and ridicule.

A preposterous form of headdress arose in the time of Henry IV. and became more exaggerated throughout the fifteenth century; this was styled the horned headdress. It began with a heart-shaped headdress, which rose higher on either side until, in the reign of Henry V., the points of the heart had become veritable horns. This ungraceful coiffure assumed all sorts of extravagant and absurd varieties. It became a favorite mark for the shafts of the satirists and the jests of the wits, to say nothing of themes

for sermons; but the fair ladies, invulnerable to all such criticisms, were not to be deterred from indulging their pet follies. One of the first references to the prevailing style was that made by John de Meun in his poem called the *Codical:* "If I dare say it without making them [that is, the ladies] angry, I should *dispraise* their hosing, their vesture, their girding, their head-dresses, their hoods thrown back with their *horns* elevated and brought forward, as if it were to wound us. I know not whether they call them *gallowses* or *brackets,* that prop up the horns which they think are so handsome; but of this I am certain, that Saint Elizabeth obtained not Paradise by the wearing of such trumpery." But this style of hair dress was not made by the hair after all, but by the wimple, which was raised on either side of the head and supported by a frame or by pins. John de Meun flourished at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and had he lived in the fifteenth, when the horned headdress *par excellence,* made up of prongs of hair protruding forward from the forehead, was in vogue, he would have been still more aghast. These horns were carefully constructed with the aid of rolls of linen. Sometimes they had two long wings on either side, and received the name of "butterflies." The high, pointed cap which was worn was covered with a piece of fine lawn, which hung to the ground, and the greater part of which was tucked under the wearer's arm. By a writer of the day we are told that the ladies of the middle rank wore caps of cloth which consisted of several breadths or bands twisted round the head, with two wings on each side "like asses' ears." As one wanders through the mazes of description of the hair dress of the period, he is prepared to agree with the author to whom we have just referred, that "it is no easy matter to give a proper description in writing of the different fashions in the

dresses of the ladies"; and so we shall submit the case in terms of still another writer's description; Philip Stubbs says: "Then followeth the trimming and tricking of their heads, in laying out their hair to the show; which, of force, must be curled, frizzled, and crisped, laid out in wreaths and borders, and from one ear to another; and, lest it should fall down, it is underpropped with forkes, wires, and I cannot tell what; then, on the edges of their bolstered hair, for it standeth crested round about their frontiers, and hanging over their faces, like pendices or vailes, with glass windows on every side, there is laide great wreathes of gold and silver, curiously wrought, and cunningly applied toe the temples of their heads; and, for feare of lacking anything to set forth their pride withal, at their hair thus wreathed and crested, are hanged bugles, I dare not say bables, ouches, ringes of gold, silver, glasses, and such other gew-gawes, which I, being unskillful in woman's tearmes, cannot easily recompt." He then discusses the "capital ornaments" upon the "toppes of these stately turrets," which he informs us consisted of a French hood, hat, cap, kerchief, and such like. He laments the fact that to such excesses did the fashions go, and so widely were the women influenced by them, "that every artificer's wife almost will not stike to goe in her hat of velvet every day; every merchant's wife, and meane gentlewoman, in their French hoods; and every poor cottager's daughter's daughter in her taffeta hat, or else wool at least, well lined with silk, velvet, or taffeta." He adds that they had other ornaments for the head, "made netwise," and which he says he believes were termed "cawles," the object of this tinsel being to have the head with its ornaments glisten and shine like a mass of gold. He then dismisses with a word the "forked cappes" and "such like apish toyes of infinite variety."

Face painting, which came in direct derivation from the tattooing of the ancient Britons, is a practice that at the time of which we are writing was very prevalent in England. It came under as vigorous arraignment by the writers of the fifteenth century as did the ridiculous forms of hair dress. The cosmetics in use were of many sorts, and were usually injurious to the skin of the user.

The dress of the women also fell under censure and satire, although that of the men was even more strongly reprobated by contemporary writers. It does not do to accept too readily the strictures passed upon the dress of any age without considering the source of the criticism. Throughout the Middle Ages, the clergy found dress a convenient topic for their moralizing, and there is no doubt that the strictures were often excessive, although the activity with which the matter was discussed indicates the importance in which it then was held and also makes it an important subject for our investigation as a determining element in the study of the manners and customs of the period as they relate to woman and reveal her to us.

The great variety of fabrics, many of them imported, which were in use enabled women to make a wide choice in the selection of material for their clothing, while it also afforded the women of the lower orders an opportunity for almost as varied a display as was made by those in higher ranks. In the reign of Henry IV., who revived the sumptuary legislation of the kingdom with regard to dress, Thomas Occliff, the poet, in rebuking the extravagances of the times, speaks of those who walked about in gowns of scarlet twelve yards wide, with sleeves reaching to the ground and lined with fur, of value beyond twenty pounds, and who, if they had been required to pay for what they wore, would not have been able to buy enough fur to line a hood; and he adds that the tailors must soon shape their

garments in the open field for lack of room to cut them in their houses. He mourns chiefly the extravagance of dress on the part of the wealthy, because "a nobleman cannot adopt a new guise, or *fashion,* but that a knave will follow his example."

After the middle of the fifteenth century, the ladies ceased to wear the long trains which they had formerly affected, and substituted excessively wide borders of fur or velvet. By the end of the century, the dress of the two sexes was so nearly alike that it was difficult to distinguish between them. The men wore skirts over their lower clothing, their doublets were laced in front like a woman's stays, and their gowns were open in the front to the girdle and again from the girdle to the ground, where they trailed slightly. At first, the ladies imitated the men, who wore greatly padded trunks, by extending their garments from the hips with foxes' tails and "bum rolls," as they were called; but as they could not hope to keep pace with the vast protuberance of the men's trunks, they introduced the farthingales, which enabled them to appear as large as they pleased.

Such were the manners and styles of the period with which the Middle Ages closed and the modern era began. They were not markedly different from those of the later Middle Ages generally, but that was because fundamental changes in society do not find their first expression in matters which are superficial. The great revolution which had been going on in the basic forms of society, through peaceful processes as well as social upheavals and the prowess of arms, had its reflux more in the morals than in the manners of the age. Nevertheless, one cannot pursue the theme of custom and manners throughout the mediæval period without being conscious of a progress or development significant of more than mere caprice. This, in fact,

was the case. Any philosophic treatment of English society during the Middle Ages would have to take cognizance of manners and customs as indices of the growth of political, constitutional, and religious principles; and in this growth would appear the consistently developing status of woman.

While it is difficult to fix upon any one fact as comprehending the condition of women in English society at the close of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the new era, there is one which challenges attention. In reaping the harvest of the narrow and bigoted times through which she passed, woman found herself possessed of one sort of fruitage, namely, public rights. The essential equality of the woman and the man, which first appeared in the castle, had become a general fact of English society. Feudalism and its vassalage of the female sex had disappeared, and the women of the industrial classes, whatever their economic condition, became sovereigns of themselves. The women of the towns, largely through the instrumentality of the guilds, had established precedents which marked the path of their progress as "persons" before the law. Associated industry drew them out of their homes, or at least out of the limited sphere of home life, and placed in their hands the loom and the spindle of the world's industry. "The candle" of the goodwife "that went not out by night" no longer burned for the provident industry of household needs, but became a veritable torch to illumine the paths of England's commerce and to add to that glory of civilization which constitutes her commercial greatness.

Out of the whole body of womankind, the Church had chosen to select a class of women who were dedicated to its service and who taught by their acts the responsibility of the prosperous toward their needy brethren;

while this does not appear to have been a benefit to women generally, but simply a training in charity for the classes who were consecrated to that object, nevertheless the influence of these chosen women upon their sex, in awakening their keener sensibilities toward poverty and distress, aided in placing upon the brow of woman the queenly crown of compassion which has made her so largely a ministering force in modern society.

The elegance and refinement of the women of the manors, as well as the stability and resourcefulness of the wives of the wealthy burghers, already gave indication of the development of the splendid type of modern English society known as the country gentry and the no less admirable class of the English tradespeople. Indeed, the evolution of the middle class as a conservative force is one of the greatest factors to be considered in mediæval study. "Blue blood," once regarded as a peculiar strain of vital fluid by which, through some mysterious means, the upper stratum of society was marked off from the lower, came to be detected in the veins of those whose only pedigree was poverty and whose only claim upon the consideration and respect of their fellows was real worth of character. An aristocracy which could be repleted from the plebeian ranks of the middle classes of society, upon whose members titles were bestowed, not because of their readiness to respond to the needs of the privy purse of a monarch, but because they had assumed leading and important positions in relation to England's honor and power, was an aristocracy that did not become archaic or degenerate. The equality of opportunity, which is the pride and promise of modern society, had its beginnings in those early days when the gate of emergence from lower class conditions was so seldom opened for anyone to pass out to where the ascent of Parnassus might quicken his ambition.

Long after feudalism had ceased, however, it was difficult to disabuse the minds of people of the idea that the blood which flowed in the veins of a gentleman was different from that of a peasant or a burgher. It is curious to note one of the legendary explanations of the division of blood as given by Alexander Barclay, a poet of the reign of Henry VII. According to his story, while Adam was occupied with his agricultural labors, Eve sat at home with her children about her, when she suddenly became aware of the approach of the Creator, and ashamed of the number of her children, she hurriedly concealed those which were less favored in appearance. Some she placed under hay, some under straw and chaff, some in the chimney, and some in a tub of draff; but such as were fair and comely she kept with her. The Lord told her that He had come to see her children, that He might promote them in their different degrees. When she presented them, according to age, one was ordained to be a king, another a duke, and so on through the list of high dignities. The maternal solicitude of Eve made her unwilling that the concealed children should miss all the honors, and she brought them forth from their hiding places. Their rough and unkempt appearance, which was due to the nature of their places of concealment, added to their unprepossessing personalities, disgusted the Lord with them. "None," He said, "can make a vessel of silver out of an earthen pitcher, or goodly silk out of a goat's fleece, or a bright sword out of a cow's tail; neither will I, though I can, make a noble gentleman out of a vile villain. You shall all be ploughmen and tillers of the ground, to keep oxen and hogs, to dig and delve, and hedge and dike, and in this wise shall ye live in endless servitude. Even the townsmen shall laugh you to scorn; yet some of you shall be allowed to dwell in cities, and shall be admitted to such

occupations as those of makers of puddings, butchers, cobblers, tinkers, costard-mongers, hostlers, or daubers." This, so the story informs us, was the beginning of servile labor; and such a view of caste was no more displeasing to the peasantry, who knew nothing better, than it was to the baron, whose pride it pampered.

A poem of the latter part of the fifteenth century gives the wishes appropriate to the men and women of the different ranks of French society. Those of the women are most characteristic. Thus, the queen wishes to love God and the king, and to live in peace; the duchess, to have all the enjoyments and pleasures of wealth; the countess, to have a husband who is loyal and brave; the knight's lady, to hunt the stag in the green woods; the lady of gentle blood also loves hunting, and wishes for a husband valiant in war; the chamber maiden takes pleasure in walking in the fair fields by the riversides; while the burgher's wife loves, above all things, a soft bed at night, with a good pillow and clean white sheets. This statement of the characteristic desires of the various classes of French women holds good as well for the English women of that period.

The court of Burgundy, which, during the fifteenth century, was notable for its pomp and magnificence and its ostentatious display of wealth, was regarded as furnishing the models of high courtesy and gentle breeding; and it was the centre of literature and art. Circumstances had brought the court of England into intimate connection with it, so that England was more affected by Burgundy than by any other part of Europe. The social character in England and France, which, to some extent, had followed parellel lines since the Norman conquest, now began to diverge widely. The breakdown of feudalism in England, where it had never been so fully developed as in France,

was not contemporaneous with French conditions in this respect. Consequently, in the latter country, the chasm between the lower and the upper strata of society grew ever wider, the lower classes becoming more and more miserable, and the upper more immoral. In England, as we have seen, serfdom disappeared, or existed in name only, and the relation between the country gentry and the peasants became increasingly intimate and kindly. The growth of commerce had spread wealth among the middle classes and had added much to their social comfort. Although social manners were still very coarse, the influence of religious reformers, such as the Lollards, was being felt in an improvement in the moral tone of the middle and lower classes of society. Moreover, the discussion of great social questions had become general among the people. Even in the middle of the fourteenth century, the celebrated poem of *Piers Plowman* took up such discussions, and one of the tenets of the Lollards was the natural equality of man. In England, conditions were ripe for the advent of a new era, and in the fulness of time there came forth the spirit of new learning, of new industry, of exploration, of investigation, and of religious freedom, to lead the English people into the inheritance for which they had been prepared by those centuries over a part of which hung such a pall as to secure for them the title of the Dark Ages.

Chapter X

The Women of the Tudor Period

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THE WOMEN OF THE TUDOR PERIOD

AS the year has its seasons, marked by alternations of active growth and recuperation for new development, so likewise has history. If the Middle Ages were a time of comparative dearth as viewed in the light of the modern era, certainly there was ample vitality hidden in the quiet forms and the mechanical fixity of the period. The season of vernal glory for England, which opened with the reign of Henry VIII. and found its climax in that of Elizabeth, was glorious because the beauty and brilliancy which characterized it were due to the splendid utilities which were passed on to it from the Middle Ages. Art, literature, and the pleasant pastimes of leisure—the affluence of prosperity—are the efflorescence of a people's history, though the absence of these graces and privileges of life may not mean a dearth in any profound sense, for it may be that their absence but indicates a lack of favoring conditions for the root stock to put forth foliage and flower. The simple form of social life which obtained during the Middle Ages, as contrasted with the brilliancy of intellect and the breadth of view of the modern era, does not denote any important difference in the character of the great mass of the English people, any more than it can be said of the fallow land not under cultivation that it has less productivity than the fields which by the waving grain give evidence of their fertile worth.

The easy acceptance in modern times of the benefits of inventions which greatly broaden the scope of living and add immeasurably to its comfort shows how readily people adjust themselves to advances in the conditions of life. So that which we look upon as an era was not so considered by the people who witnessed the stimulus which we regard as the beginning of all modern intellectual and social life. For this reason, we need not expect to discover in the women of the early modern period any radical difference from their sisters of preceding generations; but we shall find that, with the change of environment and the coming of a better state of life in general, womankind was gradually and insensibly affected in ways of permanent improvement. The opening up of new avenues of human interest and the enlargement of old ones increased the sphere of woman's life and influence; yet had it not been for the status she had achieved already, she would no more have entered prominently into the blessings and privileges of the new era than did the women of Greece generally benefit by the Golden Age of Pericles.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the modern era population was increasing so slowly as to be practically stationary, and, indeed, for generations past there had been no appreciable increase. Even after the favorable conditions of the reign of Henry VIII. became general, population made comparatively slow progress. Families were not so numerous, or the number of their members so great, as compared with to-day. It was an exception for a laborer to maintain his family in a cottage to themselves. Farm work was commonly done under the superintendence of country esquires, and the laborers lived in the paternal cottage and remained single, marrying only when by their providence they had managed to save enough to enable them to enter upon some other career.

The competition of other countries, notably France, with the industries of England proved disastrous to many forms of England's industrial activities; and to the introduction into the kingdom of a number of wares and merchandise of foreign make was attributed the great number of idle people throughout the realm. To counteract this condition, Henry issued statutes for the encouragement of manufacturing. One of these aimed to stimulate the linen industry. In order that the men and women living in idleness, which was styled "that most abominable sin," might have profitable employment, it was ordained and enacted that every person should sow one-quarter of an acre in flax or hemp for every sixty acres he might have under cultivation. The immediate purpose of the act was to keep the wives and children of the poor at work in their own houses, but it also indicated that the condition of manufactures in England was not such as to encourage an enlarging population.

The condition of the laboring classes during the reign of Henry VIII. was not such as to excite general dissatisfaction; indeed, there are evidences of a general state of contentment among the people. The laws for the encouragement of trade and the sumptuary legislation for the regulation of wages and prices were economic measures which may not stand the test of examination according to modern ideas, but which nevertheless tended, on the whole, to benefit those in whose behalf they were made. Industry was the spirit of the times, and idleness was the most abhorrent of vices. Men, women, and children, alike, were to be trained in some craft or other, to prevent their becoming public charges. The children of parents who could afford the fees which were exacted for apprenticeship were set to learn trades, and the rest were bound out to agriculture; and if the parents failed to see to

it that their children were started out in a career of labor, the mayors or magistrates had authority to apprentice such children, so that when they grew up they might not be driven to dishonest courses by want or incapacity.

Throughout the sixteenth century, all classes of society appear to have had a reasonable degree of prosperity, according to their several needs and stations. The country gentlemen lived upon their landed estates, surrounded by those evidences of solid comfort which give attractiveness to such life. The income of the squire was sufficient to afford a moderate abundance for himself and his family, and between him and the commons there was not a wide difference in this respect. Among all classes of the people there was a spirit of liberality, open and free; the practicality of the age was not inaccordant with generous hospitality. To every man who asked it, there were free fare and free lodging, and he might be sure of a bountiful board of wholesome food. Bread, beef, and beer for dinner, and a mat of rushes in an unoccupied corner of the hall, with a billet of wood for a headrest, did not constitute luxurious entertainment, but were regarded as elements of real comfort. Nor was the generous hospitality proffered to strangers often abused; the statutes of the times kept suspicious characters under such close notice, and were so repressive of predatory and vicious instincts, that there was little occasion for alarm such as is felt by the modern housewife in country districts along much-travelled roads. The hour of rising, both summer and winter, was four o'clock; breakfast was served at five, after which the laborers went to their work and the gentlemen to their business. Life lacked much of modern refinement, although it made up for this lack in wholesomeness and heartiness. The large number of beggars in the reign of Henry VIII. was due in part to the suppression of the monasteries and the

drying up of those springs of charity, and the open-handed hospitality which had encouraged begging while relieving distress. Upon the assumption that there was no excuse for an able-bodied vagrant, the penalties imposed upon "sturdy beggars" were severe. Such, in brief, was the state of English society at the beginning of the modern era.

The influence of the Church was on the wane before the rupture with the papacy was brought about by Henry VIII., and the laity were beginning to assume the positions, liberties, and privileges which had appertained to the clergy as the one scholarly and dominant class of the kingdom. Under the new conditions of liberty in which we find woman, there was no room for the continuance of even the forms of chivalry. Idealized woman no longer existed; she had become practical. Having sought a position of public activity, she had been recognized as possessing the private rights of an individual of the same nature and of similar status as man. It was no longer needful to go to the convent to find the religious or intellectual types of womankind, for religion, benevolence, and literature were no longer identified only with the cloister. However disastrous was the suppression of the monasteries to the little bands of women who wore the habit of the *religieuse,* women in general did not feel the upheaval nearly so much as they did the other social changes, which were not so radical, but were very much more influential in their relation to the destiny of the sex as a whole.

Although manners were very free, and nowhere more so than among persons of the higher orders of society, such coarseness is not the true criterion by which to gauge the women of the day. Even if they did not hesitate to use profanity, were adepts at coquetry of an undisguised type, and were guilty of conduct which merited more than the term "indiscreet," it must be borne in mind that they

were creatures of their times. While English society was noted for its rudeness and coarseness, it was saved from much of the effeminacy which poisoned the life of its neighbors on the continent. The sixteenth century took a more generous, complimentary, and true view of womankind. In the Middle Ages, she suffered from the exaggerated praise of the knight and the troubadour on the one hand, and on the other from the contempt and contumely of the ecclesiastic. From this equivocal position of being at the same time an angel and a devil she was rescued by the sanity and sincerity of the sixteenth century, and was placed in her true position as a woman, possessed of essentially the same characteristics as men, worthy of like honor, and making appeal for no special consideration excepting that which her sex evoked instinctively from men. The modern idea had begun to prevail, and woman was no longer either worshipped or shunned, but was welcomed as a sharer of the common burdens and joys of life. To continental observers it was marvellous that the English woman should have the large amount of liberty that she enjoyed; and Europeans not understanding the English point of view were apt to construe such liberty as boldness. Thus, one writer from abroad is found commenting upon the sixteenth-century English woman as follows: "The women have much more liberty than perhaps in any other place; they also know well how to make use of it; for they go dressed out in exceedingly fine clothes, and give all their attention to their ruffs and stuffs to such a degree indeed that, as I am informed, many a one does not hesitate to wear velvet in the streets, which is common with them, whilst at home perhaps they have not a piece of dry bread."

Elizabeth Lamond's *Discourse of the Commonweal* recites that there was more employment for the men and women

of the towns and cities when the wants of people were more modest. The population of London, despite the attempts made by Queen Elizabeth to prevent the influx of foreigners and persons from the rural districts, increased rapidly during her reign. On coming into the city, the rustics soon wasted their small savings in the rioting and revels which characterized the rough life of the metropolis. Drinking, gambling, and all forms of license enticed the husband from his home and destroyed the domestic felicity which had been the characteristic of country living. Country and town life were still widely separated by bad roads and poor means of conveyance. The wives even of the gentry knew, as a rule, nothing of city life, excepting from the accounts which their husbands might bring back to them from occasional jaunts to the metropolis; to all such accounts they listened with wide-eyed wonder.

The amusements of the women of the better sort, who did not find their entertainment in the vices of the times, took chiefly the form of spectacles, to which they readily flocked. It mattered little whether it was a mask, a miracle play, a church procession or a royal progress, a cock fight or a bear baiting. The brutality of their sports no more affected their feelings than do the revolting circumstances of a bull fight shock the sensibilities of the women of Spain's cultured circles. When any morning they might see the heads of some unfortunates stuck on pikes and gracing with their gruesome presence the city gate, it is not surprising that the people were not repelled by brutal exhibitions of a lesser sort. Nor did the forms of punishment in use for malefactors of one kind or another tend to soften the feelings of the women of the time. It was no unusual thing for a woman convicted of being a common scold to be seen going about the streets with her face behind an iron muzzle clamped over her mouth, a

subject for the jeers and ribald mirth of coarse-minded women no better than herself. Such characters were also taken to the ducking stool and thoroughly doused in the water. The punishment of thieves by branding and by mutilation, and the punishment meted out to women whose characters, even in that gross age, affronted public morals, were of a public nature and matters of daily observation. Nor was any woman quite sure that the gibbet, from which she could at almost any time see the swaying form of some unfortunate, might not next serve for the execution of her own husband; for the number of capital offences was large, and the inquiries of justice by no means lenient on the side of the accused.

The destruction of the monasteries brought about, in a large measure, the dissolution of the educational system of the realm. The sons of the poor husbandman, who had been taught at the convent schools, and then passed on through the universities, and thence had gradually worked their way into the professions of religion or the law, had the door of opportunity to a higher station closed to them. The deprivation was more severe in the case of girls, although it did not signify so much for them in relation to their future—unless, indeed, it did so by debarring from the profession of religion some who might have entered it. The clergy tried to meet the educational demands which were so suddenly thrown upon them, but it was impossible for them to afford educational facilities for the youth of either sex at schools without endowment or adequate support. Elizabeth, with the wide view and the sagacity which she showed with regard to all aspects of her kingdom, evinced her recognition of the importance of education by establishing one hundred free grammar schools, whose number rapidly increased during her reign. In the course of time, these schools fell under the control

of the middle class and afforded education for their sons and daughters. But in England there were certainly very few, if any, women of the middle class who entered largely into the benefits of the new learning which came in with the Renaissance. The study of Latin and Greek and the discussion of philosophy and science were confined to the women of the leisure classes. The English universities in the sixteenth century were closed to women; but such lack was made up by private tutors, women of rank and position thus having the benefit of the brightest minds of the age.

The great awakening of intellectual life in England, in common with the continental countries, showed itself in activity in all departments of thought: poetry flourished, theology caught the infection of the new spirit of liberty, and the classics were studied with avidity as the springs of the world's literature and learning. The invention of the printing press let loose the floods of knowledge, and the women of the higher classes were caught in the flow of books and pamphlets, and their intellects were quickened and their characters formed by these new sources of inspiration and wisdom. Woman was no longer designated as the daughter of the Church, which was formerly the highest encomium that the condescension of the Church could afford her. She now stood on her own independence of character, possessed of an intellect and accorded the freedom of its use.

The example of the Virgin Queen was held up to the youth of England for their imitation. Elizabeth's education had been most zealously cared for. To her remarkable aptitude for learning she added a studious disposition. At an early age she was an accomplished linguist; the sciences were familiar to her, she "understood the principles of geography, architecture, the mathematics, and

astronomy." Her studies, save one, however, she regarded rather in the light of pastime; to the exception—history—she "devoted three hours a day, and read works in all languages that afforded information on the subject." Thus was her mind stored with the philosophy of history; men and events in their ever changing relations were an open book to her. Hence, when the responsibilities of sovereignty devolved upon her she was resourceful and prompt. Whether dealing with her ambitious subjects, or receiving the wily ambassador of a foreign power, her poise could not be disturbed.

With the example and influence of the Tudor princesses before them, the women least needed the exhortation to intellectual attainments. It was said by a foreign scholar who visited England in the middle of the sixteenth century that "the rich cause their sons and daughters to learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, for, since this storm of heresy has invaded the land, they hold it useful to read the Scriptures in the original tongue." With all the profession of knowledge which was assumed by the people of this age, there went a great deal of pedantry. It became very tiresome to listen to the conversations of select bodies of the devotees of the new wisdom, who had touched but the skirts of the garments of the Muses. The great number of literary coxcombs and dilettanti who were scribbling Latin verse and propounding philosophical theses, or pronouncing upon new theological views, serves to impress one with the superficiality of the learning of the day, so far as is concerned the great body of its professed disciples, while in contrast to these we are led to respect more profoundly the genuine attainments of the brilliant group of men and women who made the reign of Elizabeth illustrious for its varied and almost matchless learning. In spite of all the pretence to learning on the part of the great

mass of women who had neither the taste nor the capacity to drink deep at the Pyrenean spring, it must be said that in no other period of English history has there been shown such marked and general eagerness for knowledge as in the sixteenth century, nor has any other period exhibited such a galaxy of great women. The wide diffusion of a love of literature is in striking contrast to the literary dearth of the preceding centuries.

It was not, however, a period of brilliant authorship among women. The new learning had first to be imbibed and become a part of the national thought before it could express itself in literary products. Translations of the classics and the works of the Church Fathers, with literary correspondence and discussions in choice Latin prose, as well as the composition of distiches in the same tongue, with occasional instances of adventure into Greek and Hebrew composition, summed up the literary labors of the women of the times. As such matters possess little interest to posterity, not many of these literary essays and letters have been preserved; but such as have come down to us mirror the intellect of the women of the age so creditably as to invite comparison with the results of modern education for the sex.

Lady Jane Grey may be cited as one of the women of the day who became notable for learning and scholarship. Of her, Fox writes: "If her fortune had been as good as her bringing up, joined with fineness of wit, undoubtedly she might have seemed comparable not only to the house of the Vespasians, Sempronians, and the mother of the Gracchi, yea, to any other women besides that deserve of high praise for their singular learning, but also to the University men, who have taken many degrees of the Schools." The facility of this noble lady in Greek composition was strongly commended by Roger Ascham.

Her remarkable knowledge of the cognate tongues of the East and of modern languages made her almost deserving of the encomium which was passed upon Anna Maria van Schurman, a Dutch contemporary, of whom it was said: "If all the languages of the earth should cease to exist, she herself would give them birth anew." The conversance of the literary ladies of the sixteenth century with the languages of the East, as well as with philosophy and theology, and the really marvellous attainments of some of them in these subjects, indicate a sound education, even though an unserviceable one.

Erasmus warmly commended the Princess Mary for her proficiency in Latin, and in later years she translated Erasmus's *Paraphrase of the Gospel of Saint John*. Udall, Master of Eton, who wrote the preface to this work, complimented her for her "over-painful study and labour of writing," by which she had "cast her weak body in a grievous and long sickness." The literary attainments and linguistic versatility of Elizabeth herself, which made her a criterion for her times, are well enough known to need no especial notice here. She had the benefit of instruction from Roger Ascham, with whom she read the classics, and from Grindal, under whom she studied theology, which was a favorite subject with her. In Italian, Castiglione was her master, and Lady Champernon was her first tutor in modern languages. She became familiar with the works of the Greek and Latin authors by hearing them read to her by Sir Henry Savil and Sir John Fortescue. In this way she became intimately acquainted with Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, and herself translated one of the dialogues of the latter, besides rendering two orations of Isocrates from Greek into Latin.

Among other studious and accomplished women of the times, Sir Thomas More's daughters held a high place.

All of them were clever and applied themselves to abstruse subjects; but Margaret, wife of William Roper, the daughter who clung passionately to her father's neck when he was being led off to execution, was the most brilliant of this family of accomplished women. Sir Anthony Coke, whose scholarship gave him the position of preceptor to Edward VI., had the gratification of seeing his daughters attract the attention of the most celebrated men of the nation. One of them married Lord Burleigh, the treasurer of the realm; another wedded Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord keeper of the Great Seal, becoming in time the mother of the famous Francis Bacon, the celebrated philosopher; and as her second husband, the third had Lord Russell.

Nothing delighted the brilliant women of the Elizabethan era so much as to have themselves surrounded by great writers, statesmen, and other celebrities. Stately magnificence was maintained at many of the great houses, and the presence of noted artists and celebrated authors gave to such homes an intellectual atmosphere. One of the centres of intellectual thought and literary life of her time was the home of Mary Sidney, after she had become the wife of Henry, Earl of Pembroke, and mistress of his establishment at Wilton. Around her hospitable board gathered poets, statesmen, and artists, drawn there not by the rank of the hostess or to satisfy her pride by their presence and fame, but because her cultivated intellect made her a fit companion for the greatest intellectual personages of the day. To have had the honor of entertaining, as guests, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, besides the lesser poets of the time, and to have been recognized by such literati as worthy of their serious consideration because of her undoubted gifts, not only reflected high compliment upon the lady, but lasting credit upon her sex, and was one of the many significant things of the Elizabethan era which

indicated how wide open stood the door of intellectual progress and equality of opportunity for the women of modern times. Spenser celebrated the Countess of Pembroke as:

> "The gentlest shepherdess that liv'd that day,
> And most resembling in shape and spirit
> Her brother dear."

Udall, the Master of Eton, speaks enthusiastically of the great number of women in the noble ranks of society, "not only given to the study of human sciences and strange tongues, but also so thoroughly expert in the Holy Scriptures that they were able to compare with the best writers as well in enditeing and penning of Godly and fruitful treatises to the instruction and edifying of realmes in the knowledge of God, as also in translating good books out of Latin or Greek into English for the use and commodity of such as are rude and ignorant of the said tongues. It was now no news in England to see young damsels in noble houses and in the courts of princes, instead of cards and other instruments of idle trifling, to have continually in their hands either Psalms, homilies, and other devout meditations, or else Paul's Epistles, or some book of Holy Scripture matters, and as familiarly both to read and reason thereof in Greek, Latin, French, or Italian as in English. It was now a common thing to see young virgins so trained in the study of good letters that they willingly set all other vain pastimes at nought for learning's sake. It was now no news at all to see Queens and ladies of most high estate and progeny, instead of courtly dalliance, to embrace virtuous exercises of reading and writing, and with most earnest study both early and late to apply themselves to the acquiring of knowledge, as well in all other liberal artes and disciplines, as also most especially of God and His holy word."

The doubts as to the utility of higher education for women in general which trouble some minds at the present day were not altogether unknown in the age of Elizabeth. Ecclesiastics especially, even the more liberal, were most prone to entertain doubts as to the advisability of permitting women to have a free range through the avenues of knowledge. It is probable that the middle classes, to whom the opportunities of education were not so general, felt the value of schools too highly to speculate upon the utility of that which was not readily within their grasp. Richard Mulcaster, who was the master of a school founded by the Merchant Taylors Company in the parish of St. Lawrence, Pultney, says: "We see young maidens be taught to read and write, and can do both with praise; we have them sing and playe: and both passing well, we know that they learne the best and finest of our learned languages, to the admiration of all men. For the daiely spoken tongues and of best reputation in our time who so shall deny that they may not compare even with our kinde even in the best degree . . . Nay, do we not see in our country some of that sex so excellently well trained and so rarely qualified either for the tongues themselves or for the matter in the tongues: as they may be opposed by way of comparison, if not preferred as beyond comparison, even to the best Romaine or Greekish paragones, be they never so much praised to the Germaine or French gentlewymen by late writers so well liked: to the Italian ladies who dare write themselves and deserve fame for so doing? . . . I dare be bould, therefore, to admit young maidens to learne, seeing my countrie gives me leave and her costume standes for me. . . . Some Rimon will say, what should wymend with learning? Such a churlish carper will never picke out the best, but be alway ready to blame the worst. If all men used all pointes of learning

well, we had some reason to alledge against wymend, but seeing misuse is commonly both the kinds, why blame we their infirmitie whence we free not ourselves." He then contends that a young gentlewoman who can write well and swiftly, sing clearly and sweetly, play well and finely, and employ readily the learned languages with some "logicall helpe to chop and some rhetoricke to brave," is well furnished, and that such a one is not likely to bring up her children a whit the worse, even if she becomes a Loelia, a Hortensia, or a Cornelia. In discussing whether or not girls should be taught by their own sex, he inclines to the belief that this practice were advisable, but that discreet men might teach girls to advantage. To use his own words: "In teachers, their owne sex were fittest in some respects, but ours frame them best, and, with good regard to some circumstances, will bring them up excellently well." In the higher circles, where cynicism frequently assumes the forms of wisdom, it was not universally agreed that women should have the widest opportunities of education. In one of his discourses, Erasmus, possibly the most accomplished of the schoolmen of the time, opens to our view the opinion of the Church as to female scholarship when he represents an abbot as contending that if women were learned they could not be kept under subjection, "therefore it is a wicked, mischievous thing to revive the ancient custom of educating them." A remark in one of Erasmus's letters lays him open to the suspicion of sharing somewhat in this view, for, in his description of Sir Thomas More, he speaks of him as wise with the wise, and jesting with fools—"with women especially, and his own wife among them."

Besides the graver matters of study which claimed their attention, the women of England were devoted to music,

needlework, and dancing, which were the favorite fashionable pastimes. Erasmus speaks of them as the most accomplished in musical skill of any people. Early as the reign of Henry VIII., to read music at sight was not an uncommon accomplishment, while those who aspired to the technique of the subject were students of counterpoint. Musical literature was scanty; the principal instruments were the lute, the mandolin, the clavichord, and the virginals.

Notwithstanding its literary flavor and its identity with the great themes of modern knowledge, the age of Elizabeth can hardly be called a serious one from the point of view of the spirit and manners of the people. Amusement was sought for its own sake, without regard to its character or quality. The spirit of enjoyment was hearty and unrestrained, and lacked discrimination and refinement. The society of the age, like its culture, was a reflex of the personality of the powerful queen, who stamped her character and her tastes upon her people. The queen, as well as her courtiers, could restrain herself upon occasion; but neither she nor her subjects felt that there was any moral or conventional need to place a check upon the expression of their emotions, and in consequence their manners were often unbecoming. It did not offend the sense of personal dignity of Elizabeth to spit at a courtier, the cut or color of whose coat displeased her, just as she might box his ears or rap out at him a flood of profanity. When Leicester was kneeling to receive his earldom, the dignity of the occasion was entirely destroyed by the volatile queen bending over to tickle his neck. As it was a case of like queen, like people, a man who could not or who would not swear was accounted "a peasant, a clown, a patch, an effeminate person." The *sine qua non* for obtaining the queen's favor was to be amusing. It mattered nothing at all at whose expense, or how personal the witticism, or

how sensitive the one who was made the butt of amusement; if the queen enjoyed it, and the boisterous laughter of the court sycophants was evoked, the sufferer had to appear gratified at the honor of his selection for his sovereign's entertainment. Coarse manners were but the expression of coarser morals; even men of the cleanest characters and highest intelligence did not shrink from any allusion, however gross, and felt no impulse to check their words either in speech or in writing. Nor were women a whit more regardful of the proprieties of expression. Ascham blamed the degradation of English morals in part on the custom of sending abroad young men to Italy to finish their education, and alleged that the corruption which they underwent at the "court of Circe" was responsible for the spread of vicious manners in English society. He writes: "I know divers that went out of England, men of innocent life, men of excellent learning, who returned out of Italy, not only with worse manners, but also with less learning." He complains of the introduction of Italian books translated into English, which were sold in every shop of London, by which the morals of the youth were corrupted, and whose venom was the more insidious because they appeared under honest titles and were dedicated to virtuous and honorable personages. As there was no public opinion to censure the reading of the women, or standards to control their conversation, they did not feel the impropriety of acquainting themselves with such works and of openly discussing them. Indeed, the women of the nobility felt themselves freed from all the restraints which the modest of the sex normally cherish for their protection.

An illustration of the freedom of the manners of the women is found in the correspondence of Erasmus, who, on coming to England as a young man, was impressed by

the prevalence of the custom of kissing. In a letter to a friend in Holland, he says, in effect, that the women kiss you on meeting you, kiss you on taking their leave; when you enter their homes, you are greeted with kisses, and are sped on your way by the same osculatory exercises; and he adds, after you have once tasted the freshness of the lips of the rosy English maidens, you will not want to leave this delightful country. A further illustration of the same thing is found in a manual of so-called English conversation, published in 1589: a traveller on arriving at an inn is instructed to discourse as follows with the chambermaid, and her conventional replies are given: "My shee frinde, is my bed made—is it good?" "Yea, sir, it is a good feder-bed; the scheetes be very cleane." "Pull off my hosen and warme my bed; drawe the curtines, and pin them with a pin. My shee frinde, kisse me once, and I shall sleape the better. I thank you, fayre mayden." This suggestion of the manners obtaining in the English inns is but an indication of a similar state of freedom throughout the lower classes of society. For while the glory of the Elizabethan age was found mostly at the top of society, its coarseness pervaded all ranks.

The rough manners of the age extended to the countenancing of all sorts of brawls. There was nothing that would collect a crowd sooner than two boys whose pugnacity had led them from words to blows; the passers-by considered such a scene fine sport, and gathered about the young combatants to encourage them in their fighting. Even the mothers themselves, far from punishing their children for such conduct, encouraged it in them. Cock fighting, bear baiting, wrestling, and sword play were favorite pastimes. The girls delighted to play in the open air, with little regard to grace or decorum; a game called tennis ball was popular. The milkwomen had their dances,

into which they entered with zest. Pets were in favor with the ladies almost as much as in the former century, and exploration into new countries had increased the variety of them. In the prints of the times, ladies are often represented with monkeys in attendance on them.

With the great multiplicity of new fashions, in novelties in customs and in costumes, in manners and even in morals, there came into vogue, from the East, hot, or, as they were called, "sweating baths." They became very common throughout England, and the places where they were to be gotten were commonly called "hothouses," although their Persian name of *hummums* was also preserved. Ben Jonson represents a character in the old play *The Puritan* as saying in regard to a laborious undertaking: "Marry, it will take me much sweat; I were better to go to sixteen *hothouses*." They became the rendezvous of women, who resorted to them for gossip and company. The rude manners of the age were not conducive to the preservation of these places from the illicit intrigues which made them notorious, and caused the name "hothouse" to become a synonym for "brothel." It was their acquired character that probably led eventually to their disuse. They were not necessarily vicious, and they furnished a convenience for the sex, who did not have the shops and clubs of to-day as places for meeting and the interchange of small talk. It must be remembered that the taverns supplied this need for the men, but, excepting in the case of the lower orders of society, the women had no similar place for such social intercourse as was secured to the men by their tavern clubs. The hothouses were not simply bath houses of the modern Turkish type, but were restaurants as well. While seated in the steaming bath, refreshments and lunch were served on tables conveniently arranged for the purpose, and, after ablutions, the women remained as

long as they cared to, in conversation. The picnics which had formerly taken place at the tavern were transferred to the hot bath, each of the women carrying to the feast contributions which were shared in common. This practice, which began with the servant maids, passed to their mistresses and on up the scale of society, and became fashionable for the ladies of the higher circles. In the absence of the modern newspaper, these places became the distributing centres for the news of the day and the talk of the town. The tavern served the same purpose for the men.

Dancing was indulged in by all classes of society, and the variety and curious names of the new styles which were introduced during the Elizabethan era are well set forth in the following quotation from a festal scene in Haywood's *Woman Kilde with Kindnesse:*

"J. SLIME.—I come to dance, not to quarrel. Come, what shall it be? *Rogero?*

JEM.—*Rogero!* no! we will dance the *Beginning of the World.*

SISLY.—I love no dance so well as *John, Come Kiss Me Now.*

NICH.—I that have ere now defer'd a cushion, call for the *Cushion-dance.*

R. BRICK.—For my part, I like nothing so well as *Tom Tyler.*

JEM.—No; we'll have the *Hunting of the Fox.*

J. SLIME.—*The Hay; The Hay!* there's nothing like *The Hay!*

NICH.—I have said, do say, and will say again—

JEM.—Every man agree to have it as Nick says.

ALL.—Content.

NICH.—It hath been, it is now, and it shall be—

SISLY.—What, Master Nicholas? What?

NICH.—*Put on your Smock o' Monday.*

JEM.—So the dance will come cleanly off. Come, for God's sake agree on something; if you like not that, put it to the musicians; or let me speak for all, and we'll have *Sellengers Round.*"

The nuptial usages of the age included some curious customs. Thus, we are told by Howe in his *Additions to Stowe's Chronicle* that, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth,

"It was the custome for maydes and gentlewomen to give their favourites, as tokens of their love, little Handkerchiefs, of about three or four inches square, wrought round about, and with a button or a tassel at each corner, and a little one in the middle, with silke and thread; the best edged with a small gold lace, or twist, which being foulded up in foure crosse foldes, so as the middle might be seene, gentlemen and other did usually weare them in their hattes, as favours of their loves and mistresses. Some cost six pence a piece, some twelve pence, and the richest sixteen pence." Handkerchiefs were the customary messengers of Cupid; the present of a handkerchief with love devices worked in the corners was a delicate expression of the tender sentiment. Thus, in Haywood's *Fayre Mayde of the Exchange,* Phyllis brings a handkerchief to the Cripple of Fanchurch to be embroidered, and says:

> "Only this hankercher; a young gentlewoman
> Wish'd me to acquaint you with her mind herein:
> In one corner of the same, place wanton Love,
> Drawing his bow, shooting an amorous dart—
> Opposit against him an arrow in an heart;
> In a third corner picture forth Disdain,
> A cruel fate unto a loving vein;
> In the fourth, draw a springing laurel-tree,
> Circled about with a ring of poesy."

Wedding contracts in the times of the Tudors were peculiar, not being regarded as binding unless there had been an exchange of gold or the drinking of wine. In the old play of *The Widow,* Ricardo artfully entices the widow into a verbal contract, whereupon one of her suitors draws hope for himself through the possibility of the engagement being invalid because it lacked the observance of this custom. He says: "Stay, stay—you broke no Gold between you?" To which she answers: "We broke nothing, Sir;" and on his adding: "Nor drank to each other?"

she replies: "Not a drop, Sir." Whence he draws this conclusion: "That the contract cannot stand good in Law." The custom of throwing rice after a wedded couple is a continuance of the practice in the sixteenth century of throwing wheat upon the head of the bride as she came from the church. Marriage was not considered irrevocable, because, aside from the regular forms of divorce, it was not unusual for a husband to sell his wife for a satisfactory consideration. Even down to recent times, the people in some of the rural districts of England could not understand why a husband had not a right so to dispose of his wife, provided he delivered her over with a halter around her neck. Henry Machyn notes in his *Diary,* in 1553, the following: "Dyd ryd in a cart Checken, parson of Sant Necolas Coldabbay, round abowt London, *for he sold ys wyff* to a bowcher." When the contracting parties were too poor to pay for the ceremony and the wedding feast, and the expenses of the occasion were met by the guests clubbing together, the occasion was termed a "penny wedding."

One of the popular customs of the day was to observe Mayday in the country districts by erecting a brightly decorated Maypole, about which the young people danced the simple rustic dances. It is not unusual to find people to-day sighing for a return of the good old customs of yore, and a favorite lament is the lapse of the observance of Mayday in the old English manner. There was, doubtless, some innocent amusement associated with this popular holiday, and only the most captious Puritan could object to it because of its derivation from the old Roman festival of Flora; but, unfortunately, the manners of the sixteenth century did not leave room for much of innocent observance of sports and pastimes in the open air, so that, in fact, the dances about the Maypole were too frequently

gross and unseemly. Charles Francis Adams, in his editing of Morton's *Narrative,* in the Prince Society Publications, in commenting upon the Merrie Mount incident in the early settlement of New England, calls attention in a footnote to the judgment of a contemporary writer as to the iniquities which were practised in connection with what in the popular imagination of the day was a wholesome and happy pastime. The statement in the passage quoted by him of the startling depravity which signalized the day throughout rural England awakens the pertinent question as to what was the moral state of the women of the rural population of the country. The testimony of the manners and customs of the day, and the effect upon England of the indescribable profligacy of the peoples of France and Italy, force the unpleasant conclusion, after making all extenuation for the standards which then obtained, that the vice which in the higher circles was as "the creeping thing that flieth" appeared in the lower circles of society in all of its foulness.

Life in the country was very delightful; buildings of fanciful architecture were erected, the majority of them still being of wood, the better sort plastered inside and the walls hung with tapestry or wainscoted with oak, against which stood out in bold relief the glittering gold and silver plate, which not alone the nobles and gentry, but the merchants and even the farmers and artisans, loved to possess. But in spite of their love of plate, Venetian glassware, because of its rarity, was preferred for drinking vessels. The housewife of quality no longer had to strew rushes upon the floor, for Turkish rugs were imported and used by the wealthy. Beds were hung with the finest silk or tapestry, and the tables were covered with linen. The homes of all classes showed the increase in the comfort of living. Even the poorest women could boast of chimneys to their houses, and were no longer suffocated by the

smoke which for egress depended upon a hole in the roof. In 1589 a wise law was passed that no cottage should be built on a tract of less than four acres of land, and that only one family was to live in each cottage. Feather pillows and beds took the place of straw pallets with a log of wood for a headrest. The poorer homes, which could not afford expensive rugs, were still strewn with sweet herbs, which, however, were renewed and kept fresh, and the bedchambers were made fragrant with flowers. The economy of the kitchen was not the hard problem it had formerly been, for in the time of Elizabeth, the period of which we are speaking, the laboring classes could obtain meat in abundance. The "gentry ate wheaten, and the poor barley bread; beer was mostly brewed at home; wine was drunk in the richer houses. Trade brought many luxuries to the English table; spices, sugar, currants, almonds, dates, etc., came from the East." Indeed, so many currants were imported into the country that it is said that the people of the places from whence they were shipped supposed that they were used for the extraction of dye or else were fed to the hogs; but the real explanation was the great fondness of the English people for currants and raisins in their pastry. While they were not gluttonous, the English then, as now, were fond of the table, and gave much attention to eating and drinking.

The old people of the age regretfully looked back over their lives to former days, when, as they said, although the houses were but of willow, Englishmen were oaken, but now the houses were oaken and the Englishmen of straw. The appearance of chimneys was not greeted as an improvement, for the poor had never fared so well as in the smoky halls of other days; they could not bear the thought that their windows, which were formerly of wickerwork, were now of glass, or that now, instead of sweet rushes, foreign carpets were upon the floors of many houses; or that so

many houses were being built of brick and stone, plastered inside. It was regarded as a sure indication of a decline in virility that the sons of the sturdy yeomen of a past generation should crave comfortable beds hung with tapestry, and use pillows—luxuries which once were thought suited only for women in childbed. In the midst of an influx of new comforts, there was a barrenness of things considered to-day to be essential, and the absence of which was made the more glaring by reason of the many comforts and luxuries with which life was surrounded. "Good soap was an almost impossible luxury, and the clothes had to be washed with cow-dung, hemlock, nettles, and refuse soap, than which, in Harrison's opinion, 'there is none more unkindly savor.'"

A Dutch traveller, who in 1560 visited England and recorded his impressions of the English home, introduces us to a pleasant picture of the home life of the times, in the following words: "The neat cleanliness, the exquisite fineness, the pleasant and delightful furniture in every point for household, wonderfully rejoiced me; their chambers and parlors strawed over with sweet herbs, refreshed me; their nosegays, finely intermingled with sundry sorts of fragrant flowers in their bedchambers and privy rooms, with comfortable smell cheered me up." The parlors were freshened with green boughs and fresh herbs throughout the summer, and with evergreens during the winter.

During the reign of Elizabeth, the hours for meals were the same as in the fifteenth century, although between the first meal and dinner it was customary to have a small luncheon, mostly composed of beverages, and called a *bever*. A character in one of Middleton's plays says: "We drink, that's mouth-hour; at eleven, lay about us for victuals—that's hand-hour; at twelve, go to dinner—that's eating-hour." Dinner was the most substantial meal of the day, and its hearty character was commented upon by

foreign travellers in England. It was preceded by the same ceremony of washing the hands as in former times, and the ewers and basins used for the purpose were often elaborate and showy. It must be remembered that at table persons of all ranks used their fingers instead of forks, and the laving of the hands during the meals was important for comfort and cleanliness. After the introduction of forks, the washing of hands during the meal, though no longer so necessary as before, was continued as a polite form for a while, although the after-meal washing appears to have been discontinued. The pageantry and splendor which attended feasting reached their greatest height in the first half of the sixteenth century. The tables were arranged around the side of the hall, some for the guests, and others to hold the tankards, the ewers, and the dishes of food; for it had not yet become the practice to put anything on the table in setting it other than the plates, the drinking vessels, the saltcellars, and the napkins. The dresser, or the cupboard, was the greatest display article of furniture in the hall of the houses of the higher orders of society, who invested large amounts of money in vessels of the precious metals and of crystal, which were sometimes set with precious stones and were always of the most beautiful patterns and of odd and elaborate forms. To such lengths went personal pride in the appearance of the dresser, that points of etiquette were raised by careful housewives as to how many steps, or gradations on which the rows of plate were placed above each other, members of the different ranks of society might have on their cupboards. Five for a princess of royal blood, four for noble ladies of the highest rank, three for nobility under the rank of duke, two for knights-bannerets, and one for persons who were merely of gentle blood, was fixed as proper form. Dinner was still served in three courses, without

any great distinction in the character of the dishes served at each course. One of the writers of the times says: "In number of dishes and changes of meat the nobility of England do most exceed." "No day passes but they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, coney, capon, pig, or so many of them as the season yields, but also fish in variety, venison, wildfowl, and sweets." As there were but two full meals in the day, and as the households of the nobility, including the many servants and retainers, were large, and as it was the practice for the chief servants to dine with the family and the guests, it will be seen that a large and varied supply of food was needed. The upper table having been served, the lower servants were supplied, and what remained was bestowed upon the poor, who gathered in great numbers at the gates of the nobility to receive the leavings from their meals. It can be seen that the labors of the women in supervising the affairs of the household were onerous. Among gentlemen and merchants, four, five, or six dishes sufficed, and if there were no guests, two or three. Fish was the article of greatest consumption among the poor, and could be obtained at all seasons. Fowls, pigeons, and all kinds of game were abundant and cheap. Butter, milk, cheese, and curds were "reputed as food appurtenant to the inferior sort." The very poor usually had enough ground in which to raise cabbages, parsnips, carrots, pumpkins, and such like vegetables, which constituted their principal food, and of which both the raising and the preparation for the table were largely the work of the women. Among the lower classes, the various feasts of the year and the bridal occasions were celebrated with great festivity, and it was the custom for each guest to contribute one or more dishes.

"Sham" is the keynote to an understanding of Elizabethan society; the Virgin Queen herself, with all her

undoubted worth and abilities, was the embodiment of the vanity and pretence of her age. Young unmarried women loved "to show coyness in gestures, mince in words and speeches, gingerliness in tripping on toes like young goats, demure nicety and babyishness," and when they went out, they had silk scarfs "cast about their faces, fluttering in the wind, or riding in their velvet visors, with two holes cut for the eyes." The visors here mentioned bring to mind Hamlet's "God hath given you one face, and you make yourself another; you jig, you amble, you lisp, you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance." The general use of masks in public places toward the close of Elizabeth's reign did not improve the moral status of the higher classes. The pretentiousness and the superficiality of the times are laid bare by Harrington, the favorite godson of the queen, whose arraignment is in unsparing terms: "We go brave in apparel that we may be taken for better men than we be; we use much bombastings and quiltings to seem better framed, better shouldered, smaller waisted, and fuller thighed than we are; we barb and shave oft to seem younger than we are; we use perfumes, both inward and outward, to seem sweeter, wear corked shoes to seem taller, use courteous salutations to seem kinder, lowly obeisance to seem humbler, and grave and godly communication to seem wiser and devouter than we be."

The dress of the women of the Elizabethan era shows the same extravagance that is apparent in all the exaggerated social phases of the time. Philip Stubbs, who wrote at the close of the sixteenth century a book entitled *The Anatomy of Abuses,* appears to have been a choleric and gloomy observer of current manners, but, with due allowance for the spirit in which he writes, a very clear picture can be gotten of the style and excesses of dress of the

several classes of society. He affirms that no people in the world were so hungry after new-fangled styles as were those of his country. After having dilated on the large amounts spent for dress, he digresses in order to moralize, and adds that the fashionable attire of the day is unsuited to the actual needs of the wearers' bodies and "maketh them weak, tender, and infirm, not able to abide such blustering storms and sharp showers as many other people abroad do daily bear." It is curious to find him harking back to the old days of which he had heard his father and other sages speak, when all the clothes for the household were made by the busy housewife, and coats were of the same color as the wool when it was on the sheep's back. In the abandonment of the household woollen industry and the excessive use of imported fabrics, he sees the reason for the many thousands in England who were reduced to the necessity of begging bread. Starch, which is now such a homely and universally helpful laundry assistant, and to the expert use of which so much of the freshness and smartness of women's attire is due, was then first introduced. "There is a certain liquid matter which they call starch," says this censorious critic of current customs, "wherein the devil hath learned them to wash and dive their ruffs; which, being dry, will then stand stiff and inflexible about their necks." The ladies of his day must have been more expert in the use of starch than are their sisters to-day, as they introduced into it coloring matter, so that it temporarily dyed the fabrics red, blue, purple, and other colors, of which yellow seems to have been the most esteemed.

The yellow starch which was so much in use originated in France, and was introduced into England by a Mrs. Turner, a physician's widow, a vain and infamous woman, who ended her career on the gallows in expiation of the murder

of Sir Thomas Overbury. Bulwer says that it is hard "to derive the pedigree of the cobweb-lawn-yellow-starched ruffs, which so disfigured our nation, and rendered them so ridiculous and fantastical." It appears that when the introducer of the custom was led to the gallows she was conspicuous in a yellow ruff worn about her neck, and after her execution the wearing of such ruffs rapidly declined. Having said this much about the ruffs which were a characteristic feature of the dress of the day of both men and women, it may be well to add that starch was not wholly depended upon for the support of these preposterous neck dresses. Wire frames covered with silver or silk thread were employed for the purpose. These ruffs are often referred to in the literature of the period. Allusion is made to them in the play of *Nice Valour,* by Beaumont and Fletcher, where the madman says:

> "Or take a fellow pinn'd up like a mistress,
> About his neck a ruff like a pinch'd lanthorn,
> Which school-boys make in winter."

Stubbs also pays his respects to the gowns of the women, which he says were no less "famous" than the rest of their attire. A quotation will serve to give an idea of the materials which were in use for dress goods and the embellishments of women's gowns; "Some are of silk, some of velvet, some of grograin, some of taffeta, some of scarlet, and some of fine cloth of ten, twenty, or forty shillings the yard; but, if the whole garment be not of silk or velvet, then the same must be laid with lace two or three fingers broad all over the gown, or else the most part; or, if it be not so, as lace is not fine enough, now and then it must be garded with gards of velvet, every gard four or five fingers broad at the least, and edged with costly lace; and, as these gownes be of divers colours, so

are they of divers fashions, changing with the moon; for, some be of the new fashion, some of the old; some with sleeves, hanging down to their skirts, trailing on the ground, and cast over their shoulders like cow-tails; some have sleeves much shorter and cut up the arm, drawn out with sundry colours, and pointed with silk rib-bands, and very gallantly tied with love-knots, for so they call them." To these striking costumes were added capes which reached down to the middle of the back, and which, our author informs us, were "plaited and crested with more knacks than he could express."

It is impossible to do more than mention the absurdities in general of women's attire and toilette during the eccentric Elizabethan era. Ladies painted their faces and wore false hair, as they had done in other ages, only with greater refinements of hideousness; they stuffed their petticoats with tow, and drew in their waists to incredible smallness as compared with the vast expansiveness of their form from the waist down, which was secured by the use of farthingales. The way they tilted up their feet with long cork soles made them amble much after the fashion of the women of China with their bandaged feet. They wore jewels and ornaments in great profusion, fine colored silk hose, which had lately been introduced among the other foreign "gewgaws" of the times, and exchanged with their friends as valued presents embroidered and perfumed gloves. In the light of the varied styles of the day, the criticism, "Like a crow, the Englishman borrows his feathers from all nations," was a true one.

In the midst of the gayety and frivolity of the Elizabethan age, the forces of reaction were hidden, but already active; and the mutterings of discontent which were heard presaged the social outbreak which was to lead a king to the block.

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Chapter XI

The Women of the Commonwealth Period

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XI

THE WOMEN OF THE COMMONWEALTH PERIOD

THE great evil of Puritanism was the tendency to hypocrisy which it produced among the people, by forcing upon them the simulation of a virtue greater than they in reality possessed. An affectation of piety which was carried to fanatical extremes, and which affected men and women alike and made them fall into stereotyped expressions and cant utterances having a savor of religiosity, while barren of the spirit of true devotion, was, to say the least, unwholesome for the nation. But the very fact that the pendulum had swung so far in the direction of primitive austerity in life and in worship showed that behind the hollow and insincere forms and words of Puritanism there was a magnificent earnestness of purpose, such as had been foreign to English life as a whole, although to be found among the followers of Wyckliffe and the Lollards.

As the spirit of Puritanism spread, its opponents, who were styled the Libertines, became more defiant in their attitude and less regardful of the strictures which the narrow-minded bigots, as they styled the Puritans, cast upon them. Thus, the women were divided by the extremes of position occupied by the men. Drunkenness among women of rank became very common. Intellectual fervor declined and learning became superficial, while the pet vices, inanities, and vain pomp of the reign of Elizabeth

lost much of their glitter and became mere prosaic and gross immorality. While the women of the court indulged in revelry, to the scandal of their sisters of the middle classes, the latter, by their piety as well as by their pious affectations, brought upon themselves coarse witticisms, ribald mirth, and allegations of misconduct under the guise of sanctity. So it happened that just when the women of the middle classes were approaching in position their sisters of the higher circles, by the ascent of the class to which they belonged and by the recognition on the part of the superior ranks of their worth as individuals and their importance as a sound element of the nation, the tendency toward a uniform equality, however remote its realization, was rudely checked by an issue which sundered the respective classes to the nethermost poles. It then became but a question of which section of the nation should administer its affairs and direct its destiny. When the two opposing camps of aristocracy and democracy met in conflict, King Charles was led to the gibbet, not because the feeling of the people was so especially bitter against him personally, as that he was the impersonation of an aristocracy which had become so intrenched in power, that, regardless of its acts, it claimed divine right to rule.

The female sex, as a whole, was not held in high esteem by the Puritans, however dear to them may have been the women of their own households. By the gayety and licentiousness of the brilliant era of Elizabeth, women had forfeited the esteem of these stern censors of public virtue, and were held up as snares in the way of the righteous and as emissaries of Satan. It would be unjust to the sound judgment of those earnest men of powerful thought and tested standards even to suggest that they did not make a distinction between woman in disgrace—as they regarded the women in representative life about

them—and woman in her normal and helpful relationship to society, as illustrated in the Biblical types of exalted womanhood. It was but natural that, at a time when the social sin was the canker of society, woman should have been looked upon in the light of the temptress in Eden. It is only with such qualification that the characterization of a writer on the period of the Commonwealth, whose description is generally accurate, can be accepted: "Under the Commonwealth, society assumed a new and stern aspect. Women were in disgrace; it was everywhere declared from the pulpit that woman caused man's expulsion from Paradise, and ought to be shunned by Christians as one of the greatest temptations of Satan. 'Man,' said they, 'is conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; it was his complacency to woman that caused his first debasement; let man not therefore glory in his shame; let him not worship the fountain of his corruption.' Learning and accomplishments were alike discouraged, and women confined to a knowledge of cooking, family medicines, and the unintelligible theological discussions of the day."

The high tension which had been maintained during the preceding reign was followed during those of James I. and Charles I. by a mental inertia; and the intellectual life of the people, which had resulted from the revival of learning in the sixteenth century, languished and almost died of inanition. Even among those men—the courtiers—who amused themselves chiefly by the foibles of the other sex, there was a morbid reaction against their associates in frivolity. It was no longer customary to praise women for their wit and repartee and to look upon them as brilliant, or to regard their coarse jests as delicate humor; instead of this, these men affected toward them great contempt, and scoffed at all other men who manifested respect for the sex. Whether among the nobility or

among the Puritans, woman was wounded in the house of her friends.

Amid the premonitory rumblings of civil strife and the actual horrors of war, when the nation was rent asunder, the matters of belief and of conduct were the burning themes for thought and discussion; it was not possible to maintain interest in intellectual concerns, even if there had not been a reaction from the highly wrought state of mind of the preceding era. That behind the Puritans' apparent hatred of beauty and of the grace of intellect and of life there was no real abandonment of the true principles which underlie all permanent beauty and grace is sufficiently shown by the production of that poet who sounded deepest the reaches of philosophy and scaled highest the ascents of poetic thought—the great Milton. He it was who caught the deep significance of the movements of the age, and brought them into harmony with the parable of human history—a feat so mighty that it called forth the highest flights of poetic fancy and sought the embodiment of the best graces of language. It is not without interest to note the absence of woman in the lofty theme of Milton, saving only as she appears in the Puritanic conception of the temptress.

Another of the Puritans, who in his way was as great as Milton, Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, caught and set forth in magnificent allegory the meaning of the Puritan movement for the individual; but there is an absence of woman in the story of the pilgrimage of Christian to the Celestial City, excepting as she appears in the character of the temptress, as at Vanity Fair. The Christian Graces, who are represented as women, are not types of the sex of the day, but are used to point the contrast the more sharply between woman in ideal and woman as the product of the times of the Puritans. It remained,

however, for the Puritans to refine the sex by the fires of relentless criticism and to produce the severer, but much nobler, Christian woman, who became the normal type, not only for the middle classes, but, to an extent, for the women of the higher circles as well.

The state of society was not favorable for intellectual expression on the part of woman, although it can hardly be said that it retarded intellectual progress. The character of the English woman was being affected in a way to save it from becoming merely superficial and volatile, like that of her French sister, and her intellect was being sobered for literary production that should have worthier qualities than mere brilliancy to recommend it. When the women of the middle classes stepped out into the arena of authorship, the value of the Puritan period as a corrective of the frivolity and false standards for women which had previously obtained becomes manifest in their writings.

The loss of opportunities of education for the women of the middle classes, which was a result of the dissolution of the religious houses, had never quite been made good, and even down to the second half of the seventeenth century there was no adequate system of popular education. In the case of the children of the nobility, suitable education and training for their station in life could be obtained only by sending them abroad to Italy, France, or Germany, or by bringing foreign teachers into the country. Girls were never sent abroad for their education; and in the case of the daughters of middle-class society, all that was regarded as needful was training in the practical affairs of housewifery—to which, in the case of the Puritans, was added inculcation of the Scriptures and the reading of other devout books. The current opinion is well expressed in the following citation from *The Art of Thriving:* "Let them learne plaine workes of all kind, so they take heed of too

open seeming. Instead of song and musick, let them learne cookery and laundry, and instead of reading Sir Philip Sydney's *Arcadia,* let them read the grounds of huswifery. I like not a female poetesse at any hand: let greater personages glory their skill in musicke, the posture of their bodies, the greatnesse and freedome of their spirits, and their arts in arraigning of men's affections at their flattering faces: this is not the way to breed a private gentleman's daughter."

Even if higher education for women were not recognized as important in the seventeenth century—and the facilities were not at hand, even if the sentiment had existed—it would be captious criticism to construe this into a grievance against the sex. In all that pertained to dignity and real worth, the women of the Commonwealth, with all the narrowness of their training, were much in advance of womankind at the beginning of the modern era, and their moral differentiation from the women of the same class before the spread of Puritanism was most marked. Puritanism was a distinct gain for woman, for through that movement the process of raising women in the social scale received great impetus. A comparison with the girls of France of about the same period certainly shows that the low state of education among the sex in England was not in any wise peculiar to English conditions. Fénelon, in referring to the neglect of the education of the girls of his country, says: "It is shameful, but ordinary, to see women who have acuteness and politeness, not able to pronounce what they read; either they hesitate or they intone in reading, when, instead, they should pronounce with a simple and natural tone, but rounded and uniform. They are still more deficient in orthography, whether in the manner of composing their letters or in reading them when written."

The Civil War itself had a wide effect upon the state of education among the people. Families in which education had been fostered, with the turn of their fortunes found it impossible to continue it; families whose fortunes had risen by political changes felt their deficiency in this respect, and affected to despise accomplishments of which they themselves were destitute. Certain of the more enlightened Puritan women pretended to apply themselves to the study of Hebrew, on the ground that they looked upon it as necessary to eternal salvation. Such pedantry brought no credit to those who affected it, but only served to heap odium upon the higher studies, which were now rejected with contempt on all sides. How effectually interest in education was suppressed by the civil disorders is shown by a remark of a traveller who visited the country after the Revolution. He says: "Here in England the women are kept from all learning, as the profane vulgar were of old from the mysteries of the ancient religions." It is amusing to note the theories which had arisen with regard to female education and which were used to extenuate its lack. Some apologists for feminine ignorance gravely asserted and led others to believe that the women of England "were too delicate to bear the fatigues of acquiring knowledge," besides being by nature incapable of doing so, for, said they, "the moisture of their brain rendered it impossible for them to possess a solid judgment, that faculty of the mind depending upon a dry temperature." But the unanswerable argument of all was that death and sin had fallen upon the race of Adam solely in consequence of the thirst which Eve had manifested for knowledge. In the face of such contentions, it was not difficult to lead people generally to accept the further conclusion as to the disastrous consequences which would certainly come upon society when woman became puffed up with her mental

acquirements; the favorable opinion which she would then have of herself would not harmonize with that obedience to men for which she was created. Worthy of note is the fact that these views extended in some circles to the arresting of the progress of religious instruction, especially that of a public nature. Evelyn, in his *Diary,* says that while the saints inherited the earth under the Protectorate, it was his invariable custom to devote his Sunday afternoons to the catechising and instruction of his family; but, he remarks, these wholesome exercises "universally ceased in the parish churches, so as people had no principles, and grew very ignorant of even the common points of Christianity, all devotions being now placed in hearing sermons and discourses of speculative and national things."

There was a sterner side to the religious movement in England than its relation to matters intellectual or even moral. The Reformation under Henry VIII. had added the names of certain women to those of the noble army of martyrs of all the ages. To be false to conscience was to be false to the very principles of their being, and both Catholic and Protestant women became intensely strong in their convictions and intolerant of those of others. The Roman Church offered up its holocaust to the passions and prejudices of the leaders of the Protestant movement, just as the Roman Church in turn exacted the tribute of their lives from many adherents of Protestantism. Woman was looked upon as inferior to man and less capable of responsible action, but in meting out persecutions there was no distinction as to sex, the weaker suffering equally with the stronger. The history of religious persecutions in England is one of its least engaging chapters, and extends over a long period. Puritan, Prelatist, and Catholic alike darkened the annals of the times by deeds of violence. To

recite the sufferings of women under the crossfires of persecution would be at best an ungracious task; and as such experiences form but a part of the history of the sex during the period which we have broadly styled the period of the Commonwealth, an instance or two of the sufferings of notable women, irrespective of their party affiliations, will suffice for citation.

One of the most sorrowful of the judicial murders of which a woman was the victim, which occurred during the whole of this extended period, was that of Lady Lisle, who, because of her sympathies with Monmouth's rebellion against the king, was brutally executed, the specific charge being the harboring of fugitives. The king's project to hand over the nation to papacy nowhere aroused such outbursts of indignation as among the Covenanters of Scotland, who saw in it the destruction of all their hard-wrought-out religious liberties, and the endangering of their lives, besides the return of the nation to the chaos from which it was emerging. The address of Lady Lisle before her execution is an example of the sublimity to which woman's character may rise under persecution, when the spirit is buoyed by faith: "Gentlemen, Friends, and Neighbors, it may be expected that I should say something at my death, and in order thereunto I shall acquaint you that my birth and education were both near this place, and that my parents instructed me in the fear of God, and I now die of the Reformed Protestant Religion; believing that if ever popery should return into this nation, it would be a very great and severe judgment. . . . The crime that was laid to my charge was for entertaining a Non-conformist Minister and others in my house; the said minister being sworn to have been in the late Duke of Monmouth's army." Continuing, she said: "I have no excuse but surprise and fear, which I believe my Jury

must make use of to excuse their verdict to the world. I have been also told that the Court did use to be of counsel for the prisoner; but instead of advice, I had evidence against me from thence; which, though it were only by hearing, might possibly affect my Jury; my defence being such as might be expected from a weak woman; but such as it was, I did not hear it repeated to the Jury, which, as I have been informed, is usual in such cases. However, I forgive all the world, and therein all those that have done me wrong." Another victim of the same "Bloody Assize" of Jeffreys, Mrs. Gaunt, of Wapping, pathetically says: "I did but relieve an unworthy, poor, distressed family, and lo, I must die!"

The age was the legatee of a spirit of venom and bigotry which expressed itself in deeds of violence more distressing than those incident to the religious wars. Deeds of blood, when connected with the defence of convictions, have about them something of the heroic, but there is absolutely no ray of glory to fall upon and lighten the dreary records of the war upon defenceless women charged with being witches, which broke out with fresh virulence with the increase of religious fervor under the Commonwealth. The charges were many and specious, but a very common form centred about the compassionate functions of women as the ameliorators of human distress.

The history of witchcraft is so intimately associated with that of medicine, that to write an account of the one involves a recital of the other. The utter lack of knowledge of the anatomy of the human body and its functions, which continued down to quite recent times, accounts for the mystery and magic which surrounded the whole subject of medicine, not only earlier than and during the period of which we are speaking, but long subsequent to it. The one who could successfully treat disease was

regarded as in league with the powers of darkness. Until the practice of medicine came to be established upon scientific principles, the care of the sick largely devolved upon women. Had it been men instead of women who performed the crude but often sincere service of nurse and physician, they would have come under the same ban with the effects of which the practitioners of the other sex were visited. It is not probable, however, that the public odium would have gone to such lengths of violence in its expression.

Among savage peoples, as the primitive tribes of Africa and the American aborigines, the man who can dispel disease by a fetich—the great medicine-man of a tribe—has always been regarded with a feeling of combined jealousy, suspicion, and fear; but, because of the occult powers he is supposed to control, fear predominates and passes into a form of reverence. Not so, however, in the case of woman, of whom we write; she was looked upon as having forfeited, to an extent, her claims upon humanity by her original alliance with Satan, and, being outside of the pale of God's grace, or sustaining only a permissive relationship to it, it was deemed a pious, a safe, and a creditable thing to mete out to her the divine dispensation of wrath. Thus again, amid numerous instances of woman's suffering as a penalty for her sex, we have the occurrence of woman being persecuted unto death because of her compassion. It was not regarded as despicable for the very person who had been succored by her in the hour of sickness to turn informant and declare that he or she had been healed by diabolical agency, and, whether under the influence of an honest hallucination, or simply actuated by a malicious propensity, to declare that evil spirits had actually been conjured up in human form and been seen by the eyes of the sufferer.

Women were not blameless in the matter of their reputation for possessing occult knowledge and having diabolical relations; for there were many women who, being morally not beyond reproach, separated themselves from society as they grew older, and resorted to medicinal knowledge and magic for a living and to maintain in the public eye the position of unenviable notoriety of which they had become morbidly fond. It gratified such natures to be reputed to possess the power—which even philosophers ascribed to them—of, at certain seasons, turning milk sour, making dogs rabid, and producing other such freakish manifestations. They were considered to be able not only to heal sickness, but to cause it; and the presence in one's clothing of a pin whose irritant end was pointed in the wrong direction was sufficient to make the person believe that he was under a spell of witchcraft. If a cow or a horse fell lame, it was the village witch who did it; if a child developed as an imbecile, or anyone became bereft of reason, it was laid at the door of the witch; the failure of crops, a drought,—anything that interfered with the comfort or convenience of a person or a community,—was due to some such representative of Satan.

As the number of happenings of this sort increased, or there occurred an epidemic of disease, or a flood or famine of especial virulence, the number of alleged witches correspondingly increased; and so the persecution swelled in volume, each wave of malevolence receding only to rise in larger aspect on the next occasion of its arousing. Not until the reign of Henry VIII. were there any enactments against witchcraft in England; prior to the passage of these acts, the persecution of a sorceress followed only upon an accusation of poisoning. During some parts of the Middle Ages the crime of poisoning was extensive, and certain women were adepts in making the deadly potions. To such

abandoned characters resorted persons of state who desired to make away with hated rivals, or the men and women of the nobility who sought to hide or to further their intrigues by the death of someone who stood in their way. As the women who practised the arts of the poisoner were also devotees of sorcery, the crime and the superstition came to be thought of together. One reason for the detestation of witches was the subtlety they displayed in concocting poisons which slowly sapped the vitality of a person, as if by a wasting illness. In 1541, conjuring, sorcery, and witchcraft were placed in the list of capital offences. Similar statutes were enacted during the succeeding reigns of Elizabeth and James I.

The curious matter of demoniacal possession called forth a great many books and pamphlets treating of its nature, history, methods of repression, and the dispossession of those under witches' spells. John Wier, a physician, wrote a treatise, in the last half of the sixteenth century, in which he described witches as but exaggerated types of the perversity which is found in women generally. In the easy subjection of the sex to malign influences he saw a proof of its greater moral weakness.

The seventeenth century was as prolific of cases of persecution of women for demon possession as any of those of the less enlightened period of mediævalism. In 1568, in a sermon before Queen Elizabeth, Bishop Jewell said: "It may please your Grace to understand that witches and sorcerers within these few last years are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their knees are bereft. I pray God they never practise *further than upon the subjects.*" The Bull of Innocent VIII., in 1484, did not do more for the furtherance

of persecution of the unfortunates who came under suspicion of using magic than did the declaration of Luther: "I should have no compassion on these witches; I would burn all of them." As upon the continent, so in England reformers took up the persecution of witches with keen zest, as a contest with the powers of darkness working for the destruction of the peace and health of humanity in an open and flagrant manner. The same spirit of espionage which was one of the baleful effects of the outbreaks of persecution during the Middle Ages attended the persecution of witchcraft in England during the seventeenth century. To save themselves from suspicion, persons informed against others, and even members of a household would give evidence leading to the trial of those of their own kin. When an unfortunate fell under suspicion,—which too frequently meant the animosity of an evil-disposed person,—the minister would denounce her by name from the pulpit, prohibit his parishioners from harboring her or in any way giving her succor, and exhort them to give evidence against her. The Puritans had conned well the story of the Witch of Endor, and, with their tendency to reproduce the Old Testament spirit, felt that the existence of witches was an abomination in the sight of the Lord, which would bring divine wrath upon the community that sheltered them unless the sin were purged from it by their death. In this they were but the inheritors of the faith of the Church from the early ages, and are liable to no more serious censure for their persecution of witches than that which they merit for the vindictive and splenetic spirit and the satisfaction in barbarities and cruelty which too often they evinced.

The persecutions attendant upon witchcraft are chargeable to no one division of the Church more than to another, for Protestant as well as Catholic, Puritan as well as

Prelatist, felt that in this work he was fulfilling the will of God and safeguarding society. King James I., in his *Demonology,* asks: "What can be the cause that there are twentie women given to that craft where there is only one man?" He gives as his reason for the disparity in numbers the greater frailty of women, which he easily and satisfactorily proves by reference to the fall of Eve, as marking the beginning of Satan's dominance of the sex.

In entering upon a crusade of persecution of witches, the Puritans were in harmony with the enactments of the sovereigns before the Commonwealth, and were in conformity with the temper of the times and the universally prevailing belief of the country. The austerity they assumed toward the sex in general made it easy for them to believe that particular characters, given over to vagabondage, were by reason of their moral turpitude especial subjects of Satan for the temptation of men. With them, the persecution of witches was not solely a matter of superstition, but of public morals as well. They were often actuated by a sincere desire to raise the standard of morality, and to preserve order and decency. That the women rather than the men should have suffered for evil courses was due, of course, to the conception that moral reprobation is to be visited upon the weaker sex.

In the second half of the seventeenth century the witchcraft superstition became a veritable epidemic, and persecution broke out in different sections of the country. Hardly had the stories of the execution of witches in one place ceased to be a nine days' wonder, when the tongues of the people were busy with stories of similar occurrences somewhere else. An angry sailor threw a stone at a boy; and the boy's mother roundly cursed the assailant of her offspring, and added the hope that his fingers would rot off. When, two years later, something of the sort actually

did happen, her imprecation was remembered against her, and there was also brought to light the fact that a neighbor with whom she was at odds had been seized with severe pains and felt her bed rocking up and down. The evidence was conclusive, the woman must be a witch; such was the verdict, and death was her sentence. Two women who lived alone, and, probably partly because of their solitary existence, had developed irascible tempers and demeanors which enlisted the hearty dislike of the inhabitants of the fishing hamlet near by, were subjected to the petty persecutions in which children instigated by their parents are such adepts; finding existence too miserable to care very much for their reputations, they endangered their security by their attitude toward their tormentors. At last, nobody would even sell them fish, and their cursing and prophecies of evil for their enemies became increasingly violent. In the order of nature, some children were seized with fits, and, under the inspiration of their elders, declared that they saw the two women coming to torment them. After being eight years under accusation, the women were brought to trial, and Sir Matthew Hale, the presiding judge, after expressing his belief that the Scriptures proved the reality of witchcraft, decided against the unhappy women and condemned them to be hanged. This occurred in 1664, and constituted the celebrated witch trial of Bury St. Edmunds.

These instances serve to illustrate the fate of a vast number of hapless women during the seventeenth century; it is said that during the sittings of the Long Parliament alone, as many as three thousand persons were executed on charges of witchcraft. Besides these unhappy wretches, a great many more suffered the terrible fate of mob violence. The frenzied populace were often too impatient to await legal procedure, and stoned the

miserable women to death. In the minds of the great majority of the people, such women were not human beings at all, and so there was no cruelty in treating them with the greatest violence possible. Indeed, such earnestness of purpose against the adversaries of God could but redound, they thought, to their eternal advantage. After all, was it not a devil, who for the time being assumed human form, that they were treating with such violence? to-morrow, the same demon might be found in a dog or in some other animal, or perhaps afflicting with cholera the swine of some peasant, to his severe loss. A description of a witch in the first half of the seventeenth century says: "The devil's otter-hound, living both on land and sea, and doing mischief in either; she kills more beasts than a licensed butcher in Lent, yet is ne'er the fatter; she's but a dry nurse in the flesh, yet gives such to the spirit. A witch rides many times post on hellish business, yet if a ladder do but stop her, she will be hanged ere she goes any further." The penal statutes against witchcraft were not formally repealed until 1751, when there was closed for England one of the saddest chapters in the history of human mistakes. The last judicial executions for witchcraft in England were in 1716.

In pleasing contrast to the unhappy creatures who were the victims of fanatical persecutions during the Commonwealth period—the women executed for witchcraft—stand the noble women who were developed by the stern conditions of the Civil War—the heroines of internecine strife. The domestic incidents of the Civil War form an interesting commentary upon the character of the English woman, as they reveal her in brave defence of castle or homestead, patient in hardship, courageous in danger, and fertile in resources to avert misfortune. Every important family was ranged on one side or the other, and the line

of division often passed through households. To all other issues which aroused human passion, or touched the springs of human character and brought forth the reserve heroism of human life, was added that issue which stirs deepest the human heart,—the issue of religion. The contest was not merely between king and people: it was a contest as well between the people themselves as to the form of religion they desired as the expression of their faith.

Under such conditions women could not be kept out of the turmoil and the strife; perhaps one of the important ends which this distressful period brought about was the crystallizing of the convictions of many women, who otherwise would not have thought or felt deeply upon that subject which is fundamental to the welfare of a nation and the character of its people,—the subject of religion. Royalists and Puritans, the women were arrayed on each side. They followed the issues with an earnest alertness born of an intelligent understanding of the causes involved and their own vital relation to the contest in its results.

One of the Puritan women who literally entered into the fray was Mrs. Hutchinson. Her father, Sir Allen Apsley, was governor of the Tower during Sir Walter Raleigh's incarceration. It is probable that Mrs. Hutchinson had some knowledge of medicine, because during the siege of Nottingham she was actively engaged in dressing the soldiers' wounds and furnishing them with drugs and lotions suitable to their cases, and met with great success in her rôle of physician even in the cases of those of some who were dangerously wounded. But it was not solely in the character of nurse and physician that she was so active, for, in conjunction with the other women of the town, after the departure of the Royalist forces, she aided in districting the city for patrols of fifty, the courageous

women thus taking an active share in the arduous duties of the town's defence. This intrepid woman later appeared in the character of peacemaker. The elections of 1660 were of a violent character, on account of the ill feeling between the Royalists of the town and the soldiers of the Commonwealth. At the critical moment, Mrs. Hutchinson arrived, and, being acquainted with the captains, persuaded them to countenance no tumultuous methods, whatever might be the provocation, but to make complaint in regular form to the general and let him assume the work of preserving the peace. This they consented to do; and the townsmen were equally amenable to her wise counsel, and contracted to restrain their children and servants from endangering the peace of the people.

Courage and initiative were not limited to the women on one side of the contest, as is well illustrated by the conduct of the Countess of Derby, who, in 1643, made a remarkable defence of Latham House; the countess was of French birth and had in her veins the indomitable spirit of the Dutch, for she was a descendant of Count William of Nassau. She was called upon either to yield up her home or to subscribe to the propositions of Parliament, and, upon her refusal to do either, was besieged in her castle and kept in confinement within its walls, with no larger range of liberty than the castle yard. Her estate was sequestered, and she was daily affronted with mocking and contemptuous language. When she was requested by Sir Thomas Fairfax to yield up the castle, she replied with quiet dignity that she wondered how he could exact such a thing of her, when she had done nothing in the way of offence to Parliament, and she requested that, as the matter affected both her religion and her life, besides her loyalty to her sovereign and to her lord, she might have a week's consideration of the demand. She declined the

proposition of Sir Thomas Fairfax to meet him at a certain house a quarter of a mile distant from the castle for purposes of conference, saying that it was more knightly that he should wait upon her than she upon him. After further parleyings failed of conclusion, she finally sent a message that brought on a renewal of the siege. She said that she refused all the propositions of the Parliamentarians, and was happy that they had refused hers, and that she would hazard her life before again making any overtures: "That though a woman and a stranger, divorced from her friends and robbed of her estate, she was ready to receive their utmost violence, trusting in God for deliverance and protection."

The siege dragged on wearily for six or seven weeks, at the end of which time Sir Thomas Fairfax resigned his post to Colonel Rigby. The castle forces amounted to three hundred soldiers, while the besieging force numbered between two and three thousand men. In the contest five hundred of these were killed, while the countess lost but six of her soldiers, who were killed through their own negligence. The colonel manufactured a number of grenadoes, and then sent an ultimatum to the countess, who tore up the paper and returned answer by the messenger to "that insolent" [Rigby] that he should have neither her person, goods, nor house; and as to his grenadoes, she would find a more merciful fire, and, if the providence of God did not order otherwise, that her house, her goods, her children, and her soldiers would perish in flames of their own lighting, and so she and her family and defenders would seal their religion and loyalty. The next morning the countess caused a sally of her forces to be made, in which they got possession of the ditch and rampart and a very destructive mortar which had been used to bombard the besieged. Rigby wrote to his superiors, begging

assistance and saying that the length of the siege and the hard duties it entailed had wearied all his soldiers, and that he himself was completely worn out. In the meanwhile, the Earl of Derby and Prince Rupert made their appearance, and Rigby made a hurried retreat; in his endeavor to escape the Royalist forces, he fell into an ambush and received a severe punishment before he reached the town of Bolton. Such were the deeds of women of spirit upon each side of the civil conflict; and because of their elements of character and loyalty to conviction, the women of the better classes of England, irrespective of their affiliations, mark a high point of progress in the sex toward the goal of independence and individuality which the civil strife aided them to secure.

The Society of Friends, or Quakers, was one of the religious communities of the Commonwealth, whose members suffered grievously on account of their religion. To the lot of their women fell an abundant share of persecutions and martyrdoms; they were scourged, and ill treated in every conceivable way. Their lives, inoffensive and pure, were a constant rebuke to those of the loose livers about them. Although Charles II. had promised, on coming to the throne, that he would befriend them, their miseries were not greatly abated. The persecution of Quaker women had continued from the middle of the sixteenth century, when, in the west of England, Barbara Blangdon was imprisoned for preaching, and other Quakeresses were placed in the stocks by the Mayor of Evansham, and also treated with other indignities. Throughout the seventeenth century, cruel persecutions of women of the Quaker persuasion were often repeated.

With the Friends, the idea of the ministry of the Gospel was broadened so as to include in its preachers and teachers those who possessed the necessary gift, without

regard to sex. Whatever may be individual opinion as to woman's prerogative in this respect, there can be no manner of doubt but that the advance in the status of woman which was marked by the Society of Friends was a real contribution to the times and a gift of permanent value to the English women in general. Those women who claimed the right to preach were as ready to suffer in behalf of their ministry. They were scourged, and ill treated in every possible way; Bridewell Prison opened to receive many within its gloomy interior; but they remained steadfast to the cardinal articles of their belief, declaring: "As we dare not encourage any ministry but that which we believe to spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit, so neither dare we to attempt to restrain this ministry to persons of any condition in life, or to the male sex alone; but as male and female are one in Christ, we hold it proper that such of the female sex as we believe to be imbued with a right qualification of the ministry should exercise their gifts for the general edification of the Church."

Having considered the conditions which existed during the period of the Commonwealth in England, and particularly the rise of the Puritan spirit and its dominance, as related to the women of the times, it now remains to bring this period into connection with that of the Restoration, which offers to it such a strong contrast. It is not conceivable that, if the Puritan leaven had so thoroughly permeated the mass of the English people as appeared to be the case upon the surface of English society, there would have been so sudden and radical a reaction upon the return of Charles II. from his long sojourn abroad. That so many who cried "crucify him" should now be found with "all hail" upon their lips, that women who had assumed the Puritan twang and pious demeanor should throw off

their assumed character and stand out in their true light under the glare of a court that was brilliant with revelry, is evidence of the futility of attempting to force ideals and standards upon a people who have not been gradually developed to the attainment of the qualities which they are commanded to assume.

Even those women who could not abide the insufferable weight of piety which spread over the period frequently found it politic not to antagonize that which formed the very atmosphere they had to breathe; but these women were not shameless profligates because they could not enter into the intense introspection and the outward circumspection of the Puritan dame. When the return of Charles II. brought to the front a code of manners which revealed the real morals of the people, many women who had walked "circumspectly," and were not under suspicion of playing a part, did not any longer conceal their real proclivities, but stood forth as women of pleasure. The Countess of Pembroke, Lady Crawshaw, and Mrs. Hutchinson, all ornaments of their sex during the Puritan régime, were yet alive at the Restoration, and beheld with dismay the shameless performances of their countrywomen.

As marking an epoch, Puritanism is to be regarded as having destroyed the last relics of mediævalism. "Under the Stuarts," says Creighton, "society became essentially modern, and many of the institutions upon which the comfort of modern life depends had their origin."

Chapter XII

The Women of the Restoration Period

XII

THE WOMEN OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

"I STOOD in the Strand and beheld it and blessed God," wrote John Evelyn in his *Diary,* referring to the magnificent pageantry with which Charles II., on returning from his exile in France, was received by the London populace. With this pious ejaculation, the courtly Royalist welcomed the presence in England of that scion of the house of Stuart whose reign of profligacy was to mark his period as one of the most reprehensible in the history of the country. It is little wonder that Charles was so affected by the great demonstration in his honor that he marvelled that he should have remained away from the country so long when the people were languishing for his return. The manner with which London threw off its garb of Puritanical gray and manners grave, and donned bright attire and assumed the airs of gayety and frivolity, showed how insincere and superficial was the religious seriousness which had been worn as suited to the temper and times of the austere Protector.

The change was not so sudden but that it had begun to appear during the weak rule of the second Cromwell—Richard. But the spontaneousness with which the people welcomed Charles in all the towns through which he passed on his way, and the abandonment and joyousness which spread over the land, signalized one of the most

important reactions which have occurred in public sentiment and public morals of any age. Music, dancing, revelry, and license suddenly wrenched the times from all their wonted decorum, and in the flood tide of pleasure and frivolity were borne away many who had long subsisted upon their reputations for peculiar piety. Not only did the leopard who had changed his spots, and the Ethiopian his skin, for political purposes when the Civil War bore the Puritans into power, return to their real markings, but great numbers of those who had sustained their Puritanical professions with greater or lesser degrees of sincerity and earnestness caught the maddening thrill of levity with which the very atmosphere seemed surcharged, and rapidly passed down the gradations of character into recklessness and vice.

The Royalists were well prepared for the change from piety to profligacy, and hailed the advent of the light-hearted monarch as a veritable release of souls in prison. During the Commonwealth, the wretchedness of their condition had wrought the widespread depravity which existed among them. The uncertainty of their fortunes and the necessity of often meeting together made them *habitués* of the taverns, which were the centres for social intercourse; and it may have been thus that the habit of excessive drinking, so prevalent in this period, was contracted. Upon the principle that no one gives serious heed to the doings of a drunkard, abandoned and dissolute habits were looked upon by the Royalist plotters as a safeguard for themselves and a security to their plans:

> "Come, fill my cup, until it swim
> With foam that overlooks the brim.
> Who drinks the deepest? Here's to him.
> Sobriety and study breeds
> Suspicion in our acts and deeds;
> The downright drunkard no man heeds."

The very vices, however, which the Royalists acknowledged having been led to cultivate by their "pride, poverty, and passion" were imitated by the baser element among the Puritans when the Cavaliers became triumphant. Those who formerly had boasted that they "would as soon cut a Cavalier's throat as swear an oath, and esteem it a less sin," now assumed the rôle of sinners as complacently as they had previously played the part of saints.

A period of industrial depression subtracts, in the estimation of the people, from the merits of a government, however noble may be its policy; and for twenty years previous to the Restoration the condition of the masses of the people had steadily been growing worse, so that there was a widespread longing for more provisions and less piety. Before the Civil War, the state of the people had reached high-water mark; so vast had been the increase of England's commerce, owing to the strife among the neighboring powers, that the revenue from customs had almost doubled, and the blessings of prosperity were felt among all classes. Sir Philip Warwick even asks us to believe that there was scarcely any cobbler in London whose wife did not include a silver beaker among the furnishings of her modest sideboard. During the Commonwealth, pauperism increased to an alarming extent, so that at the time of the coming of Charles ten thousand men and women were languishing in the debtors' prisons, and thousands of others were living in continual dread of the sheriff's executions.

The condition of English society at the coming of Charles II. explains somewhat the tremendous outburst of popular enthusiasm with which that event was greeted. The people on the village green received him with morris dances to the music of pipe and tabor, and with other

rustic festivities which for so long a time had been banished as sinful engagements. At some of the towns through which the triumphal procession passed, young damsels to the number of hundreds lined the way and strewed flowers in the path of the king. The women were especially noticeable for their active participation in all the popular demonstrations. It was as if they had felt so heavily the repression of the rigorous theocracy of Cromwell that they were ready to accept to the fullest the pledge of better times which the return of Charles gave them, and to pass from fuller liberty into the wildest license. The king himself, by his own example, lost no time in establishing the new standards of conduct. Even the reckless spirit of the Londoners was somewhat surprised when it was bruited abroad that the king, who was received as a Divine dispensation to a waiting people, had slunk out of the palace the first night after his return, under cover of darkness, in the furtherance of one of the unsavory intrigues which made his life and his court notorious in the annals of English history. The sensibilities of the English people were not seriously shocked, however,—we are speaking of the Royalist following and not of the Puritans,—and in the rebound from the first amazement at the revelation they received of the kingly character, they were ready to follow his lead; and so English social life during the reign of Charles was greatly corrupted. As the key to the times is to be sought in the tone of the court, the unwelcome task must be fulfilled in the interests of history, as it relates to woman, of setting forth the actual conditions which were instituted and prevailed at the court of Charles II.

The king came to England fresh from the court of Louis XIV., and tainted by all the vices which made that court infamous. For the first time, England became widely

affected by the gross iniquities which had for a long while been a familiar fact of the noble circles of French society. So long as England imported from France only its dress goods, jewelry, and novelties, the influence exerted upon it by its continental neighbor touched society in only a superficial way; but when England's "Merrie Monarch" brought over with him the low standard of French morals, England paid tribute to France in a more serious way and modelled its conduct after that of the more frivolous people. The reign of Charles brings to view as the principal fact of the times the personality of the monarch himself, not because he was a strong man, but because he was so thoroughly weak in his character and abandoned in his conduct. We have nothing to do with political or constitutional measures, but, in passing judgment upon the state of society, we are constrained to say that the reign of King Charles marked a distinct retrogression, and, in its effect upon the status of woman, is notable for the distinction it bestowed upon the courtesan class. The honoring of such characters discounted greatly the gain for the higher ideals of womanhood which had been secured by the Puritans.

The woman whom Charles had signalized by his favor immediately upon his entrance into London was known simply as Barbara Palmer until, by the ratio of her decline in morals, she was elevated in honors and received the titles of Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland. It needs not the saying that beauty and graces of manner and of form were her chief recommendations to the royal notice. This woman, who became notorious throughout England,—and who, upon the retirement of Clarendon, whose dismissal she had secured, stood upon the balcony of the palace in her night attire to rain down upon his head curses and vile epithets,—was the woman

who, through her influence over Charles, occupied a commanding position in England. Her amours before coming under the royal notice absolve the king from responsibility for her moral ruin, but the offence of thrusting her before the English people and the contamination exerted upon society by her presence and conduct at court are what make up the indictment of womanhood against him. Although many glimpses are afforded in the gossipy news of the corrupt court of this courtesan's imperious domination of Charles, nowhere is the story told more simply than by Pepys in his *Diary*. He says: "Mr. Pierce, the surgeon, tells me that, though the king and my Lady Castlemaine are friends again, she is not at White Hall, but at Sir D. Harvey's, whither the king goes to her; but she says she made him ask her forgiveness upon his knees, and promise to offend her no more so, and that indeed she hath nearly hectored him out of his wits."

Such incidents were not confined to the knowledge of the court circles, but percolated all classes of society, and not only furnished the newsmongers with racy scandal, but set in a whirl the light heads of many foolish women who without such incitement from court example might have remained models of virtue.

Another of the king's favorites—and indeed one who was, unlike the disagreeable countess, a favorite as well with the English people, and whose name has not yet lost its popularity—was Nell Gwynn. Pretty, witty, and open-hearted, her face an index of the simplicity and purity of character which the unfortunate circumstances of her birth and bringing-up denied her, a veritable gem of womankind lost amid the flotsam and jetsam of a coarse age, she is to be regarded less as a sinner than as one sinned against, although she herself, perhaps, seldom paused to reflect upon the moral value of her actions.

"How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like the canker in a fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name."

It will not do to judge too harshly the character of one whose whole conduct showed how essentially guileless and gentle, as well as generous, were her instincts by the rigorous standards which, however severe, are none too exacting to be held up for women as representing the only possible assurance of security for the status which they have attained; but it is in no spirit of apology for her wrong courses that all who undertake to discuss the life of Nell Gwynn are irresistibly drawn to a recital of her virtues rather than to a reprobation of her faults.

The poor orange girl, who, according to some authorities, first saw the light of day in a miserable coalyard garret in Drury Lane, and whose tutelage was the vulgarity of the London streets, and her training a barroom where she entertained the patrons by the sweetness of her voice, courtesan though she became in the court of Charles II., yet numbered among her descendants Lord James Beauclerk, Bishop of Hereford, who died in 1782. Nor was she associated with religion merely in this remote way, for she herself, as patroness of Chelsea Hospital, and promoter of many charities and the dispenser of private benefactions, may reasonably claim consideration in her own behalf as a woman instinct with all the virtues saving one only,—the one she had never had an opportunity to possess. The effect of Nell Gwynn's presence at court upon the minds of the populace was in some respects more insidious than that of the professional courtesan Castlemaine, for, by the pleasing philosophy of her winsome nature, the vices of the court became transmuted into pure gold in the estimation of the young women who were affected by her as their ideal.

When the irascible temper of the Duchess of Cleveland became too intolerable to be borne, the king's excitable fancy was adroitly directed by the Duke of Buckingham, English envoy to the court of France, to Mademoiselle de Quéroualle, whom he planned to set up as a rival to her in the king's affections, and thus to further his own ambitious ends, which were antagonized by the duchess. Thus to place in control of the king's volatile sentiments the seductive French woman, who would represent the duke's interests, seemed a veritable stroke of masterful politics of a character not unworthy of Machiavel himself. It was not difficult to persuade Louis that such a sentimental alliance would cement Charles to the French interests; and as the project would save her from a French convent, mademoiselle was not found intractable. A decorous invitation, so worded as to spare the blush of the lady's modesty, was sent from the English court, and she was forthwith despatched to the court of Charles to fulfil the double rôles of courtesan and diplomat, which were so often combined in the person of astute females. Her appearance at court was hailed by Dryden, the court poet, in some complimentary stanzas of indifferent worth. Evelyn recorded in his *Diary* that he had seen "that famous beauty, the new French Maid of Honor"; but adds: "In my opinion, she is of a childish, simple, and baby face." After the birth of a son to the king, who was created Duke of Richmond and Earl of Marsh in England, Mademoiselle de Quéroualle was made Duchess of Portsmouth. At the same time, she was drawing a considerable pension from Louis in recognition of her services to France. The noble-minded English gentleman Evelyn records the extravagant tastes of the duchess, whose control over the king had become unbounded, in these words: "Following his Majesty this morning through the gallery, I went with

the few who attended him into the Duchess of Portsmouth's dressing-room, within her bed-chamber, where she was in her loose morning garment, her maids combing her, newly out of her bed, his Majesty and the gallants standing about her; but that which engaged my curiosity was the rich and splendid furniture of this woman's apartment, now twice or thrice pulled down and rebuilt to satisfy her prodigality and expensive pleasures, while her Majesty's does not exceed some gentlemen's wives' in furniture and accommodations. Here I saw the new fabric of French tapestry, for design, tenderness of work, and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I had ever beheld. Some pieces had Versailles, St. Germaines, and other places of the French king, with huntings, figures, and landscapes, exotic fowls, and all to the life rarely done. Then the Japan cabinets, screens, pendule clocks, great vases of wrought plate, tables, stands, chimney furniture, sconces, branches, brasures, and all of massive silver, and out of number; besides of his Majesty's best paintings. Surfeiting of this, I dined at Sir Stephen Fox's, and went contented home to my poor but quiet villa. What contentment can there be in the riches and splendour of this world, purchased with vice and dishonour!"

"There was, in truth, little of contentment within those sumptuous walls;" a weak queen helpless under the indignities imposed upon her, a duchess burning with passionate resentment, and light-hearted Nell Gwynn laughing with amusement; a group of courtiers and courtesans with little sense of honor, tossed about by conflicting emotions of fear and jealousy, perplexity and heartaches; involved in disgraceful intrigues and malicious conspiracies; attended by all the demons which wait upon the mind that has sold itself to sordidness and sin; mocked at by a troupe of perfidious spirits of pride, avarice, and ambition—such was

the company within the palace walls that opened to receive the woman who was to be, if possible, the most despicable of them all, and certainly the most detested.

In pleasing contrast to the fashionable and often brilliant debauchees of the court of Charles II. may be placed the Countess de Grammont, to whom the description of the poet Fletcher applies:

> "A woman of that rare behaviour,
> So qualified, that admiration
> Dwells round about her; of that perfect spirit,
> That admirable carriage,
> That sweetness in discourse—young as the morning,
> Her blushes staining his."

She moved in the profligate sphere of the English court, and later in that of France, without for a moment having the brilliancy of her intellect, the acuteness of her wit, or the whiteness of her character tarnished by vulgarity of action or of word. Importuned by lovers of high degree for alliances that were not regarded as compromising in that gay atmosphere, and, when it was found futile to seek to entice her into an equivocal position, as ardently sought by the beaux for the honorable relation of wife, she held them all at arm's length. Strong and resolute, she, like a brilliant moth, circled about the passionate flame of the English court without singeing her wings, neither did she seek, by an adventitious flame of responsive passion, to draw on to haplessness any of the courtiers who sought her with ardent protestations of affection. Though light-hearted and vivacious, she had none of the arts of a coquette; but when the persistence of the Comte de Grammont convinced her, in spite of the scepticism which her surroundings created, and of his known character of frivolity, that in him she might find a faithful and devoted husband, she allowed her heart to hold sway of her destiny and yielded

herself in marriage to him. It had been better for her, however, if she had remained a maid of honor than to have become, by marriage to an unprincipled man, a wife of dishonor. The exceptional worth of character, the brilliancy of intellect, and the steadiness of purpose which La Belle Hamilton exhibited, did not, in the eyes of the voluptuous count, constitute a charm sufficient to wean him from his evil courses to a life of consistency and of uprightness. Her husband lived to an advanced age, yet she survived him a brief while. Her brother has left us a word picture of her at about the time of her introduction to the court of Charles II., which, in connection with her portrait by Sir Peter Lely, leaves no doubt of her matchless charms. He says: "Her forehead was open, white, and smooth; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate. Her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness not to be equalled by borrowed colours; her eyes were not large, but they were lovely, and capable of expressing whatever she pleased; her mouth was full of graces, and her contour uncommonly perfect; nor was her nose, which was small, delicate, and turned-up, the least ornament of so lovely a face. She had the finest shape, the loveliest neck, and most beautiful arms in the world; she was majestic and graceful in all her movements; and she was the original after which all the ladies copied in their tastes and air of dress."

In reading the memoirs of the court of Charles II., one is apt to overlook the fact that at the period there was a queen in England. There was a time when the consort of the king was not so styled; her position was a personal one, as related to her husband, but she did not share the honors of the throne. How strangely reversed since the later Anglo-Saxon period, as contrasted with the reign of

Charles II., had become the relation of the wife of the monarch! for in these last times the full recognition was tendered Catherine of Braganza to which her position as consort of Charles gave her title—there was no question as to there being a queen in England in the full meaning of the term. But her personal relation to the king as her husband was an equivocal one; perhaps once in a month he might honor her with his presence at supper, and occasionally absent himself from the enticements of his mistresses. It was so from the very first; for, before Catherine had landed in England, the intrigue of Charles II. with the notorious Castlemaine was a matter of common knowledge. The graceless king had the effrontery to include Lady Castlemaine in the list of appointees for the queen's following. The indignant bride had not yet learned the futility of seeking to assert her rightful position, and, haughtily declaring that she would return to her own country rather than submit to such an indignity, drew her pen across the name and swept Lady Castlemaine from proximity to her person. In so doing she incurred the deeper enmity of the female fury who ruled Charles with an iron will and was for long years to be the queen's evil genius. The queen was not brilliant, but she was in every sense a woman; and when on a particular occasion, similar to a present-day drawing room, Lady Castlemaine was introduced by the king, the queen, who did not know her and imperfectly caught the name, received her with grace and benignity; but realizing in a moment who it was, she became transformed, her urbanity disappeared, and, fully alive to the insult which had been publicly offered her, she was swept with a wave of passion: "She started from her chair, turned as pale as ashes, then red with shame and anger, the blood gushed from her nose, and she swooned in the arms of her women." Lord Clarendon, who was a

witness of the contest between the wife and mistress and sought to prevent the king from becoming controlled by the latter, finally absented himself from court; thereupon the king wrote him a letter in which, after declaring his purpose of making Lady Castlemaine a lady of his wife's bedchamber, he added: "And whosoever I find to be my Lady Castlemaine's enemy, I do promise upon my word to be his enemy as long as I live." The king's missive had its effect; and Lord Clarendon undertook to persuade the queen to bear the indignity, although he had replied to the king that it was "more than flesh and blood could comply with," and reminded him of the difference between the French and English courts: "That in the former, such connections were not new and scandalous, whereas in England they were so unheard of, and so odious, that the mistress of the king was infamous to all women of honour."

The king himself succeeded better in reconciling the queen to the shameful situation than did his minister, for, after several scenes between them, he treated her with studied coldness and indifference, and in her presence assumed an air of exceptional gayety toward all other women. The unhappy queen finally acquiesced in a situation which she could not improve, and suffered much greater indignities than those which she had futilely resented. There is little more of interest to add with regard to this woman, whose position placed her first at court, but who really was regarded by the king and his courtiers as the most insignificant of its personages. She never quite gave up the hope that she might win at least a share of the affection which her husband bestowed upon others, and to that end she eventually laid aside her retiring ways, dressed décolleté, and gave magnificent balls, to which she invited the fairest women of the nobility, thus seeking, by humoring the fancy of her husband, to gain his love.

The maids of honor at the court of Charles, who were for the most part mistresses of the king and of the courtiers, and the male sycophants, whose only pursuit in life was intrigue, made a choice group of profligate spirits, who, without any restraint, but with every encouragement from their royal master, assiduously furthered the chief interest of their existence.

There are not wanting those who utterly disparage the morals of the Commonwealth, and affirm that both Cromwell and his followers generally were guilty of as base conduct as King Charles and his courtiers, and that the only difference was that which exists between covert and open practices of an evil nature. The fact remains, however, that even down to the present day the English people, and the American as well, are inheritors of the spirit of the Puritans, to the great good of society. It was the Puritans who taught reverence for the Sabbath and made the Bible a common textbook of life; and although they were strict and narrow in their views, earnestness always is straitened in its bounds until it bursts them and floods society with the power of the principles it advocates.

The apologists for King Charles, who hold to the ancient formula of the faith of the Fathers and of the Puritans,—that woman from the days of Eden unto the present time has stood for the downfall of man,—seek to enlist sympathy for him by saying that in his various peccadilloes the women seemed to be the aggressors. This plea, which was advanced by his friendly contemporaries, who sought to whitewash the outside of the sepulchre of the king's character while leaving undisturbed the inward corruption, is still gravely repeated by partisan historians to-day. Sir John Reresby said: "I have since heard the King say they would sometimes offer themselves to his embrace." It is unfortunate that the integrity of the chivalrous king should

have suffered such assaults; but as no other English monarch seems to have been so desperately set upon to his destruction by the women of his times, it may not be too great a piece of temerity to put in a plea for the women of the reign of the glorious Charles II. by suggesting the bare possibility that all the moral probity was not possessed alone by him who reigned King of England!

We can much better accept the description of society given by Clarendon. It is not, however, to be taken as an index to the innate perversity of woman in wicked ways, but as indicating the natural effect of the lowering of the esteem in which the sex was held by the evil living of men in the higher circles of society. Yet not all the indictments which are brought forward by Clarendon would be considered to-day as of a serious nature. He comments: "The young women conversed without any circumspection of modesty, and frequently met at taverns and common eating-houses; they who were stricter and more severe in their comportment became the wives of the seditious preachers or of officers of the army. The daughters of noble and illustrious families bestowed themselves upon the divines of the time, or other low and unequal matches. Parents had no manner of authority over their children, nor children any obedience or submission to their parents, but every one did that which was good in his own eyes."

That the change in the feminine character was not simply due to the unsettled state of society from the Civil War, which undoubtedly did affect the standard of the times, but was attributable more largely to the imported French manners with which Charles made the nation familiar, is beyond doubt. Peter Heylin, who had travelled in France and published an account of his observations, and who was led to pass severe strictures upon the

conduct of the French women, modified his gratulatory expressions with regard to English women as follows: "Our English women, at that time, were of a more retired behaviour than they have been since, which made the confident carriage of the French damsels seem more strange to me; whereas of late the garb of our women is so altered, and they have in them so much of the mode of France, as easily might take off those misapprehensions with which I was possessed at my first coming thither."

It was not until after the death of the king, which occurred on February 6, 1685, that the nation recovered from the spell of debauchery through which it had passed, and assumed its wonted sobriety. Seven days prior, Evelyn wrote in his *Diary:* "I saw this evening such a scene of profuse gaming, and the king in the midst of his three concubines, as I had never before seen, luxurious dallying and profaneness." After the death of Charles and the proclamation of James II., he reverted again to that scene and said: "I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening) which this day se'nnight I was witness to, the king sitting and toying with his concubines—Portsmouth, Cleveland, Mazarine, etc.—a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2000 pounds in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflexions with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust!"

Although the monarch who made England merry with all sorts of frivolities had passed away, the influences of his life did not quickly cease. One of the social changes which came about in his reign was destined to become very

widely extended and to have an important bearing upon the structure of English society. This was the introduction of women upon the stage. In discussing the amusements of the English people in the several periods, we have as yet said nothing with regard to the theatre, because it did not relate to woman in an especial manner. The old mediæval mystery and morality plays were given under the auspices of the Church, and formed a part of the religious instruction of a people who neither knew how nor had the facilities to read. With the rise of the modern drama and of such masterly interpreters of human passion as the dramatists of the Elizabethan era, the stage was secularized and the range of subjects and appeal was very much widened.

In 1660, for the first time, women were engaged to perform female characters. Before that time, they had been prohibited from appearing on the stage; largely because the female parts were usually—and especially in the beginning of the popularity of the theatre—so vulgar and obscene that it not only would have been highly disgraceful for a woman to appear in such characters, but the vulgarity was too great even for the countenance of females in the audience without resorting to the expedient of wearing masks. This practice led to shameful intrigues and discreditable escapades which added to living the zest which was craved by the women of the court who, thus disguised, were *habituées* of the theatre. If it was thought that by allowing women to take female parts in the plays the tone of such characters might be improved, the ordinances which permitted the practice certainly failed of effect. D'Israeli, taking the æsthetic view of this innovation of the time of Charles II., says: "To us there appears something so repulsive in the exhibition of boys or men personating female characters, that one cannot conceive

how they could ever have been tolerated as a substitute for the spontaneous grace, the melting voice, and the soothing looks of a female."

The absurdity which he suggests was aptly expressed by a poet of the reign of Charles II., in a prologue which was written as an introduction to the play in which appeared the first actress:

> "Our women are defective, and so sized,
> You'd think they were some of the guard disguised:
> For to speak truth, men act, that are between
> Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen;
> With brows so large and nerve so uncompliant,
> When you call Desdemona—enter giant."

Nell Gwynn is said first to have attracted the attention of King Charles when she appeared in a humorous part at the theatre; she was one of the earliest actresses to appear *in propria persona*. As ungraceful as were the female parts when taken by men, the innovation of women was not received kindly by many critics of the stage. Thus Pepys, in his *Diary,* is found lamenting the new custom: "The introduction of females on the stage was the beginning of a change ever to be regretted. Pride of birth, but not insolence, is, to a certain extent, highly commendable, and which had hitherto been the chief characteristic of the old English aristocracy, who had kept themselves till now almost universally free from stained alliances; but from this time they became the patrons, and even the husbands, of any lewd, babbling, painted, pawed-over thing that the purlieus of the theatre could produce."

Evelyn comments upon the theatre to the same effect, and remarks that he very seldom attended it, because of its godless liberty: "Foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act, who, inflaming several young noblemen and gallants, become their

misses, and to some their wives." He then instances several of the nobility whom he says fell into such snares, to the reproach of their families and the ruin of themselves in both body and soul. He laments the fact that the splendid products of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were crowded off the stage to make room for the pasteboard and tinsel of John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell. At the time that Evelyn and Pepys were recording their comments upon the tone of the stage, thousands were living who well remembered the vehement denunciation of plays by the sturdy old Puritan William Prynne, who was rewarded for his ardent crusades against the iniquities of the theatre by the snipping off of his ears. The condemnation of the theatre was not confined to any party or church, for Bishop Burnet is found vigorously denouncing theatres, under the new conditions inaugurated by Charles II., as "nests of prostitution."

The depravity of the taste of the patrons of the theatres had its influence upon the writers of the plays. Men whose personal lives were unexceptionable did not scruple, when writing pieces intended for representation upon the stage, to introduce as much indecency as they possibly could, knowing full well that unless their works were highly seasoned they would never get a hearing. The manners and tastes of the court of Charles II. established the standard of the theatres during his reign; the depravity of public sentiment and the general corruption of the times were greatly increased by these mirrors of the manners and life of the court. So utterly foul became the repute of the stage, that, to quote from Sydney's *Social Life in England,* "Every person who had the slightest regard for sobriety and morality avoided a playhouse as he would have avoided a house on the door of which the red cross bore witness to the awful fact that the inmates had been

smitten by the pestilence which walketh in darkness and by the sickness that destroyeth in noon-day. The indecorous character of the stage inflicted much less injury than it would have done had it been covered with a thin veil of sentiment. Those dramatic representations, at which women desirous of maintaining some reputation for modesty deemed it incumbent upon them to wear masks, were, as may be supposed, studiously avoided by those who really were virtuous." The influence of the metropolis did not extend over the kingdom as it does to-day, so that outside of the tainted circles there were to be found social spheres where the old gentility of the Elizabethan age was maintained, although subjected to such sneers as were directed against them by Dryden, who looked upon them as unfortunate enough to have been bred in an unpolished age, and still more unlucky to live in a refined one. "They have lasted beyond their own, and are cast behind ours."

Artificiality without any pretence to sincerity was the spirit of the times of Charles II.; the maundering sentiments and flagitious bearing of the actors upon the stage were not different from the conduct of the buffoons who masqueraded in titles and elegant attire at the court of the king of revels. Foppery in speech and in dress and the interlarding of conversation with French phrases found favor among the court followers. It was regarded "as ill breeding to speak good English, as to write good English, good sense, or a good hand."

Women as artists appeared earlier than women as players. For several centuries they had been accustomed, as a polite accomplishment, to illuminate manuscripts, and indeed this for a long time was the only form of art worthy of the name in England. There had developed, however, considerable taste and skill in wood carving, as well as further advancement of the ancient art of the goldsmith,

which, as we have seen, was developed enough in Anglo-Saxon times to constitute an English school. But art in its more particular meaning was not found domestic to England until the reign of Charles I. It was the influence of the great school of Dutch artists that awakened in England art instinct and created artistic talent. England's art history may be dated from the time of Van Dyke's residence in the country, at least in so far as it embraces women. When Van Dyke was at the English court, Anne Carlisle shared with him the royal patronage. The king's fine taste in art matters had unerringly led him to fix his favor upon this woman, and her works show the undoubted genius she possessed.

The Puritan embroilment, which was destructive to all forms of intellectual advancement as long as it kept the nation in an unsettled state, had a repressive effect upon art; but from the time of the Restoration the stream flowed on with increasing depth and volume, and the list of England's woman painters not only became creditable to the country, but afforded another criterion by which to prove the lofty possibilities of the sex. Mary Beale, a painter in oil and in water-colors, who received high commendation from the famous portrait painter Sir Peter Lely, was a painstaking and industrious artist. Anne Killigrew, who was maid of honor to the Duchess of York, in the brief span of her life acquired a permanent reputation, not only by her portraits, which included those of the Duke and Duchess of York, but by her verses as well. These and other women of talent were the precursors of the women who did so much for the art history of the eighteenth century.

In considering the place of woman in literature during the period of which we are writing, it is well to keep in mind the words of Lady Mary Wortley Montague: "We

are permitted no books but such as tend to the weakening and effeminating of our minds. We are taught to place all our art in adorning our persons, while our minds are entirely neglected." This opinion of woman has not yet become obsolete, so that it is too much to expect to find, in the seventeenth century, women of the highest literary attainments, and certainly one need not look for women among the creators of literary style and founders of English literature. A literary woman is to some masculine minds a matter of everlasting scorn. Such minds will not be offended in the perusal of the literature of the seventeenth century by finding women wielding the pen for the instruction or the edification of elect circles of superior intellects or to please the vulgar taste of the common people. Excepting as writers of occasional verse or of memoirs, the names of few female authors appear in the literary annals of the period.

Amusement and not intellect was the contribution which women were supposed to make to the times of Charles II., and, excepting in matters reprehensible, there was often a degree of simplicity about the amusements indulged in that makes one wonder if such ingenuous entertainment does not bespeak less design and craftiness in the natures of those women than is usual to associate with plotters and intriguers. Lady Steuart, one of the most noted court beauties, found her chief diversion in sitting upon the floor, with subservient courtiers about her, building card houses. Lord Sunderland treated his visitors to an exhibition of fire eating by the renowned Richardson, who awakened the wonder of his beholders by his feats of devouring brimstone on glowing coals, eating melted beer glasses, and roasting a raw oyster upon a live coal held upon his tongue. Such mountebanks and jugglers were the successors of similar characters who wandered through

the country from castle to castle during the Middle Ages, or became attached to some great lord's following. Other forms of indoor amusements, which would hardly comport with the gravity of the same high circles of society in the nation in these latter times, may be stated. Pepys speaks of one day going to the court, where he found the Duke and Duchess of York, with all the great ladies, sitting upon a carpet on the ground, playing: "I love my love with an A, because he is so-and-so; and I hate him with an A, because of this and that;" and he observed that some of the ladies were mighty witty, and all of them very merry. Blindman's-buff was a favorite game among even older people; and Burnett says that at one time the king, queen, and whole court "went about masked, and came into houses unknown, and danced there with a great deal of wild frolic. In all this they were so disguised that, without being in the secret, none could distinguish them. They were carried about in sedan chairs, and once the queen's chairman, not knowing who she was, went from her; so she was alone and much disturbed, and came to Whitehall in a hackney coach (some say it was in a cart)."

Scarcely a week passed by but that Whitehall was brilliantly illuminated for a ball, at which the king, queen, and courtiers danced the "bransle," which was a sort of country dance, the "corant," swift and lively as a jig, and in which only two persons took part, and other French figures. Billiards and chess were played a great deal, and gambling was a ruling passion of the day. All the great women at court had their card tables, around which thronged the courtiers, who won and lost enormous sums. The passions which were aroused by gambling often led to violent quarrels, and frequently these were settled by duels, although duelling had been prohibited by the king at the time of the Restoration.

Many fantastic changes had taken place in women's attire during the reign of Charles. During the Commonwealth, Puritan sentiment, and proscription as well, had reduced the dress of all classes to a remarkable uniformity. The costume most common to women consisted of a gown with a lace stomacher and starched kerchief, a sad-colored cloak with a French hood, and a high-crowned hat. The Geneva cloak was no fit covering for the courtesan, and was instantly thrown aside that the butterfly which had hidden in this demure chrysalis might emerge fluttering in all its gay and brilliant colors. Loose and flowing draperies of silk and satin took the place of woollen and cotton gowns; the stiff ruff which in the reign of Elizabeth had been facetiously styled "three steps to the gallows," because the fashionables of her day would go to any length to possess it in the most extravagant size and value, had, under the Commonwealth, become much more circumspect as to its appearance and circumference, and was esteemed entirely too respectable to comport well with the freedom of the reign of Charles. Then, too, the artistic taste of the day, which ran to portrait painting, had enhanced the estimate of ladies with regard to the matter of their personal charms. So it was regarded not only as artistic, but æsthetic, in a wider sense, to run to realism. The word "run" is used advisedly, for there was a veritable scramble to get rid of the formal and, it must be conceded, ridiculous ruff. But when the latter disappeared from the neck and shoulders, there was nothing adapted to fulfil its functions, so that, through a lamentable omission on the part of the English women or their too hasty adoption of French fashions, the shoulders and bosoms of the ladies were given little consideration by the designers or the makers of their gowns.

But the head was not treated so indifferently as the shoulders, for, when the plain top hat of the Puritan was abandoned, the milliner already had something at hand to compensate the ladies for their loss. Feathers of rare plumage and rich color were employed in the widest profusion. The hoods, too, underwent the general metamorphosis, and emerged from their penitential gray into "yellow bird's eye," and other tints as indescribable. The new styles exposed their votaries to wide criticism. Many pamphlets appeared whose straightforward titles showed in what an undisguised manner the subject was to be found treated within them. The general complaint was that immodest dress was not confined to balls and chambers of entertainment, but that women brazenly appeared in similar costume at church, braving all criticism to satisfy their morbid desire for observation. The mode of hairdressing of the period ran largely to ringlets, which, as they appear in the portraits of the great ladies of the day, seem at the present time stiff and unartistic. The art of using cosmetics, which had lapsed during the Puritan period, was actively revived, and it was not only the stage beauties, but the court women as well, who used paint in such profusion as almost to disguise their identity.

It can easily be seen that a woman of the period must have been a gorgeous spectacle in full dress, with painted face adorned with black patches cut in designs of hearts, Cupids, and occasionally even coaches and four, and with her hair dressed in the prevailing mode, which was to have "false locks set on wyres to make them stand at a distance from the head, as fardingales made the clothes stand out in Queen Elizabeth's reign." A woman thus attired, leaning upon the arm of a gallant with head adorned by the periwig worn by the men of the day, was ready for any fashionable function. As hospitality on a

large and generous scale was a circumstance of the times, it might be that she would pass into the hall, with its massive, carved furniture, magnificent tapestries, sumptuous furnishings, glittering crystal, elegant plate, and beautiful wall paintings, to assume her position of mistress of a household and do the honors at a table generous with its viands and ample in all the varied range of English and French cookery. In doing so, she would be governed by the etiquette in whose precepts she had been schooled, and of which the following is a sample: "*Instruction to British Ladies When at Table*—A gentlewoman, being at table, abroad or at home, must observe to keep her body straight, and lean not by any means on her elbows, nor by ravenous gesture disclose a voracious appetite. Talke not when you have meate in your mouthe, and do not smacke like a pig, nor eat spoone-meate so hot that the tears stand in your eyes. It is very uncourtly to drink so large a draughte that your breath is almost gone, and you are forced to blow strongly to recover yourself; throwing down your liquor as into a funnel, is an action fitter for a juggler than a gentlewoman. In carving at your table, distribute the best pieces first; it will appear very decent and comely to use a forke; so touch no piece of meate without it."

The table furnished an opportunity for many pleasant passages of repartee, which, however, were apt to be broader in their point and more undisguised in their language than would be tolerated in any society of to-day pretending to the least gentility. Here, too, was engendered frequently the tender sentiment which gave rise to proper attentions to ladies or to gallantry, according to the character of the courtier and his lady-love. When gallantry palled upon the satiated spirits of the courtiers, to preserve their unsavory reputations they had nothing more difficult to do than to stuff their pockets with

billets-doux, which they paraded in view of their fellows as evidence of their successful intrigues. When love took a more creditable form, and the lover in formal and open fashion went to pay his addresses to his lady-love, he sallied forth in the evening, accompanied by a band of fiddlers, and serenaded her with some choice verses. After the suitor was accepted and the marriage arranged for, little of sentiment entered into it. There was no attempt to hide the mercenary motives, which were frankly displayed. Indeed, women's marriage portions were regarded by the seventeenth-century writers as the cause of much wedded misery and sin. It was argued that if these marriage portions were dispensed with, marriage would be more likely to be contracted upon the enduring basis of compatibility and love; but among the nobility, monetary considerations and questions of rank were usually regarded as sufficient motives for marriage, unless passion swept aside caution and led to a *mésalliance*. Gallants who serenaded with dishonorable motives were generally treated roughly. A life spent between a town residence and a country house, with frequent attendance at court, comprised the ambitions of the young nobility. Marriage was frequently regarded simply as an incident which did not materially alter the attitude of either of the contracting parties to the rest of the court personnel.

The manners of the times of Charles II. were not the manners of England sober, but of England intoxicated with the new wine of French frivolity; and with the passing away of the king who had led them to worship false gods, the English people gradually returned to their habitual steadiness. Yet, the dalliance with frivolity had effects to be seen throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century, in the superficiality of the era in regard to woman, and, finally, in a stiff and artificial scheme of convention.

Chapter XIII

The Women of the Eighteenth Century

XIII

THE WOMEN OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE artificiality of eighteenth-century society was a precursor of the practicality of that of the nineteenth. The influences which had given shape to the society of the time of the Stuarts had passed away, and the new influences and forces were in operation. The result of the contest between the Puritan and the sensualist had been a broadened social apprehension; and into this new concept entered harmoniously the catholicity of the worldly spirit and the conservatism of the religious spirit. This was the society which was productive of women of eminence in the arts and literature, as well as of women untalented, but blessed with a broader scope of life, more varied experience and controlled natures, than those who had gone before them.

Society as a whole indirectly profited by the English dalliance with French manners. Corruption was but a circumstance of the closer relationship, in social ways, of England with the continent. Political animosities and ambitions had more largely than anything else brought England and the rest of Europe into contact, nor was the contact by clashing at an end. A nation generally is not greatly concerned in the projects of princes, so that, while territorial aggrandizement or curtailment or similar benefits or injuries resulted from the wars of England, the salient fact as a social consideration is that the English people

were still further broadened from the provincialism which the insularity of their country induced. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the women of England had escaped the local and narrow spirit and separateness of customs which threatened them from England's beginning, and from which they were saved by recurrent and ever more frequent contact with continental nations.

English society, however, had not become so imbued with the cosmopolitan spirit as to feel at ease in it as in a loose garment; the people were straitened and formal. They were lacking the versatility and adaptability which developed in the nineteenth century, when, amongst women, convention became settled custom, and custom the careful promulgator of social laws. There were present all the evidences of the finer sensibilities which give clear notions in matters intellectual, and society in the last half of the eighteenth century became thoroughly aroused to a social consciousness with regard to the middle and lower classes. The industrial revolution and the rise of the school of classic economists brought forward great discussions which had for their purpose the determination of the fundamental basis of a nation's prosperity. Into this discussion women entered as participants, but very much more largely as interested subjects of the matters involved.

The growth of England's industries, more than any other single thing, contributed to the well-being of the masses of English society, while at the same time it tended to make sharper distinctions among them. The increase of ease and comfort in living affected largely the character of domestic life; and the wider scope of industry and sterner demands for labor, which were the outcome of a desire to participate largely in the benefits of the new industries, gave opportunity to individual talent and application; while the unfrugal and shiftless, or the unfortunate, experienced

in proportionately greater degree the severity of living. To mining, fishing, farming, sheep rearing, fruit cultivation, weaving, seafaring,—the industries of England other than manufactures,—were added during the seventeenth century glass manufacture, cotton manufacture, and other industries which were the foundation of England's material greatness. This list was greatly augmented during the eighteenth century, and the development of manufactures of all sorts created the factory towns, which drew to them, as into a vortex, the populations of the rural districts, and created many problems of modern society in which female and child labor are involved.

Among the women in everyday life, social habits were easy and existence had many elements of contentment. Gossip—which had become differentiated from scandal, because of a wider variety of subjects to chatter about than flagitious conduct, occupied a large proportion of the time of the women. The public gardens and the promenades of the cities, notably the capital, were as much resorted to as during the reign of Charles, and there was as keen an interest in the display of styles and the parade of wealth by the women who rode in their carriages or were carried in their sedan chairs as formerly there had been in the conduct of the gilded set of the Restoration.

Society as such had not as yet reached the coherence which it knows to-day. It was much a matter of classes or sections. The "democracy of aristocracy," which makes a cross-section of all the social grades and includes the wealthy, the noble born, the intellectual and the gifted of all ranks of society, was a later development. It is true that women of gifts did not have to rely upon patrons for their reputation, but had direct access to the public and were sustained by their own worth; nevertheless, the pride of birth was still strong enough to make those who

possessed it hold themselves far above even the most gifted and talented of the sex who were not born within the narrow circle of noble society. Yet it was no longer simply the person garnished with titles of nobility who attracted the popular eye and was singled out in the crowd; for when women whose only claim to notice was their saintliness of character and Christian service, or their philanthropy, or their literary gifts, or their art attainments, were seen in the places of general resort, they attracted as much attention as did women of rank.

The prosperous and well-domiciled woman of the middle classes could rest in the comfortable feeling that the demarcations of society no longer absolutely precluded the possibility of her daughters' entering the ranks of those famous for their signal worth of one sort or another; but as yet the great movements of modern society had not come into close touch with the lives of ordinary women. Newspapers were published, but women seldom read them. Philanthropy was making headway, but women had little part in its movement, nor had they fully entered as yet into their birthright in the realm of literature. In the rural districts, their life was so contracted that a weekly newsletter, passed from hand to hand, was the chief medium of information as to the outside world; but even this was not usually read by the womenfolk, who were content to receive their news by hearsay. Unlike the women of the aristocracy, the women of the middle classes did not become beneficiaries to any large degree in the wider connections of their husbands, because such connections were for the most part of a business nature and not social. They were women of mediocrity, and their rôle was domestic. It was still thought unimportant to widen woman's horizon beyond the elements of an education. To these, in the case of the more prosperous, were added those

accomplishments which are still looked upon by ignorant persons with disdain, but which serve to bridge the chasms of society by establishing tests of good breeding irrespective of social birth; so that to reading, writing, geography, and history there were added music, French, and Italian. Such a curriculum, faithfully followed, prepared young women to move in polite circles.

The old cry of women's incapacity for intellectual attainments of the same order as those of men is audible throughout the eighteenth century. One writer, after speaking of the regard in which the sex were held in England, discusses the matter of their education and concludes that it is not easy to comprehend the possibility of raising them to a higher plane than that to which they had been lifted, because of their natural incapacity for other than the domestic and social functions which they so gracefully fulfilled. To English people generally, it was a matter of pride that their women received greater respect and were held in greater affection than those of continental countries. This was often remarked upon by foreign visitors, one of whom observes that "among the common people the husbands seldom make their wives work. As to the women of quality, they don't trouble themselves about it." The position of the wife in middle-class society has been set before us by Fielding in a satire that has in it much of truth: "The Squire, to whom that poor woman had been a faithful upper-servant all the time of their marriage, had returned that behavior by making what the world calls a good husband. He very seldom swore at her, perhaps not above once a week, and never beat her. She had not the least occasion for jealousy, and was perfect mistress of her time, for she was never interrupted by her husband, who was engaged all the morning in his field exercises, and all the evening with his bottle

companions." Certainly home had come to have attached to it a notion of greater sanctity than ever before, and women were accorded their natural rights and position, with the respect and deference in the tenderer relations of life, which signified much more than the profuse chivalry of the Middle Ages or the mock courtesy of the time of Charles II.

The English people were above all domestic; and the period, in its emphasis upon this phase of social life,—the English home,—marks in a way the beginning of that conception which is now regarded as being at the very foundation of a secure society. While France was going on in its iconoclastic way, destroying all things sacred in a mad desire to seize for the Third Estate the rights which they realized belonged to them, and the grasping of which was to cause French history to be written in the blood and fire of the great Revolution, the English, having passed out of the social depravity of the reign of Charles II., became eminently steady and conservative of those elements of social progress which, in their case, unlike that of their French neighbors, had already been secured for them by progressive and largely peaceful measures.

It is interesting to note that the term "old maid" had now entered into the popular vernacular, although "spinster," with its transferred meaning, was the more respectful way of speaking of unmarried women. "An old maid is now thought such a curse," says the author of the *Ladies' Calling*, "as no Poetick Fury can exceed; looked on as the most calamitous creature in nature. And I so far yield to the opinion as to confess it to those who are kept in that state against their wills; but sure the original of that misery is from the desire, not the restraint, of marriage; let them but suppress that once, and the other will never be their infelicity. But I must not be so unkind to

the sex as to think 'tis always such desire that gives them an aversion to celibacy; I doubt not many are frightened only with the vulgar contempt under which that state lyes: for which if there be no cure, yet there is the same armous against this which is against all other causeless reproaches, viz., to contemn it."

The esteem in which matrimony was held as the manifest destiny of the fair sex is illustrated by all the social manners of the day. Women had, however, the good taste to conduct themselves without reproach, and not to invite attention even while they most appreciated it. In a word, the young women of the eighteenth century were not coquettes, and with them modesty was not a lost art. They were not masculine, and indeed might have been regarded from the standards of to-day as prudes. But the prudery of the British women excited the admiration of foreigners, thoroughly satiated with the arts, the flaunting manners, and the gilded charms of the young women of the European capitals.

One foreigner is found recording his astonishment at the diversity in the manner of walking of the ladies, and sees in it an index of their characters; for, says he, when they are desirous only of being seen, they walk together, for the most part without speaking. He suggests that the stiffness and formality of their demeanor when not thus on dress parade are laid aside for greater naturalness. But he says that, with all their care to be seen, they have no ridiculous affectations. In former times, it was not customary for young women to go about without the attendance of some older person, and a girl so doing was brought under suspicion as to her character; but in the eighteenth century, young girls went about freely with their fellows and without any other company, and a writer of the period assures us that if a young girl went out with a

parent, unless such parent were as wild as herself, she felt as though she was going abroad with a jailer. It was not usual, however, for girls to go about unchaperoned.

It would be an unwarranted assumption to suppose that demureness was any deeper than demeanor in the maidens of the eighteenth century, for the feminine character—and not times and customs—determines the effectiveness of the sex. Matters of custom and of dress signify little, and yet the Solons who passed the act of 1770 to lessen the potency of woman's charms appear to have been utterly oblivious of the important consideration that these do not rest in outward circumstance, but in inward grace. This curious act prescribed: "That all women, of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, whether virgins, maids, or widows, that shall, from and after such Act, impose upon, seduce, or betray into matrimony, any of his Majesty's male subjects by the scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, etc., shall incur the penalty of the law now enforced against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and that the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void." And this, too, just six years before the American Declaration of Independence!

Allusion to this act proscribing aids to beauty leads to the consideration of the matter of costume and adornment. This can be summarized in the censure which was called forth from an Italian visitor: "The ladies of England do not understand the art of decorating their persons so well as those of Italy; they generally increase the volume of the head by a cap that makes it much bigger than nature, a fault which should be always avoided in adorning that part." After this observation, the writer passes on to criticise the length of the ladies' skirts, affirming that they wore their petticoats too short behind, unlike

the ladies of Italy and France, for—and we are indebted to him for his explication of trains—these ladies "pattern after the most graceful birds." By their failure to emulate the peacock or the bird-of-paradise in the matter of their splendid appendages, the English women are said to lose "the greatest grace which dress can impart to a female." He continues, saying: "In truth, not beauty, but novelty governs in London, not taste, but copy. A celebrated woman of five foot six inches gives law to the dress of those who are but four feet two. . . . This is not the case in Italy and France; the ladies know that the grace which attends plumpness is unbecoming the slender; and the tall lady never affects to look like a fairy; nor the dwarf like the giantess, but each, studying the air and mien which become her figure, appears in the most engaging dress that can be made, to set off her person to the greatest advantage."

Passing from the generalities of female dress and coming to particular descriptions thereof, here is an account of the costuming of the ladies who assembled at court to congratulate his majesty George II. and his queen, Caroline, on their nuptials: "The ladies were variously dressed, though with all the richness and grandeur imaginable; many of them had their heads dressed English, of fine Brussels lace of exceeding rich patterns, made up on narrow wire and small round rolls, and the hair pinned to largé puff-caps, and but a few without powder; some few had their hair curled down on the sides; pink and silver, white and gold, were the general knots worn. There was a vast number of Dutch heads, their hair curled down in short curls on the sides and behind, all very much powdered, with ribbands frilled on their heads, variously disposed; and some had diamonds set on ribbands on their heads; laced tippets were pretty general, and some had

ribbands between the frills; treble-lace ruffles were universally worn, though abundance had them not tacked up. Their gowns were either gold stuffs or rich silks, with either gold or silver flowers, or pink or white silks, with either gold or silver nets or trimmings; the sleeves to the gowns were middling (not so short as formerly), and wide, and their facings and robings broad; several had flounced sleeves and petticoats and gold or silver fringe set on the flounces; some had stomachers of the same sort as the gown, others had large bunches of made flowers at their breasts; the gowns were variously pinned, but in general flat, the hoops French, and the petticoats of a moderate length, and a little slope behind. The ladies were exceedingly brilliant likewise in jewels; some had them in their necklaces and ear-rings, others with diamond solitaires to pearl necklaces of three or four rows; some had necklaces of diamonds and pearls intermixed, but made up very broad; several had their gown-sleeves buttoned with diamonds, others had diamond sprigs in their hair, etc. The ladies' shoes were exceeding rich, being either pink, white, or green silk, with gold or silver lace braid all over, with low heels and low hind-quarters and low flaps, and abundance had large diamond shoe-buckles."

The preposterous hooped petticoats which ladies wore out of doors subjected them to the good-natured banter of the wits of the time. One of these sallies, which appeared about 1720, runs as follows:

"An elderly lady, whose bulky squat figure
By hoop and white damask was rendered much bigger,
Without hood and bare-neck'd to the Park did repair
To show her new clothes and to take the fresh air;
Her shape, her attire, raised a shout in loud laughter:
Away waddles Madam, the mob hurries after.
Quoth a wag, then observing the noisy crowd follow,
'As she came with a hoop, she is gone with a hollow.'"

The hoopskirt was the characteristic feature of eighteenth-century styles, and it grew to such enormous proportions as seriously to inconvenience the wearer and to interfere with the cubic feet of space which a pedestrian might reasonably claim as his right on a crowded thoroughfare. But there were eighteenth-century styles which were more reprehensible than the oft-caricatured hoop.

There was a class of votaries of fashion, in contrast to the mass of society, whose only notion of dress was display, and toward the middle of the eighteenth century these imported the most extravagant and immodest of French styles. As they paraded the public gardens, to which all classes resorted, the staid people were scandalized by their appearance. T. Wright, in his *Caricature History of the Georges,* says that "what was looked upon as the *beau-monde* then lived much more in public than now, and men and women of fashion displayed their weaknesses to the world in public places of amusement and resort, with little shame or delicacy. The women often rivalled the men in libertinism, and even emulated them sometimes in their riotous manners." Women of the town were greatly in evidence, and a trustworthy traveller of the times affirms that they were bolder and more numerous in London than in either Paris or Rome. Not only at night, but in broad daylight, they traversed the footpaths, selecting out of the passers-by the susceptible for their enticement, particularly directing themselves to foreigners. Archenholz says: *On compte cinquante mille prostituées à Londres, dans les maîtresses en titre. Leurs usages et leur conduite déterminent les différentes classes où il faut les ranger. La plus vile de toutes habite dans les lieux publics sous la direction d'une matrone qui les loge et les habille. Ces habits mêe pour les filles communes, sont de soie, suivant l'usage que le luxe a généralement introduit en Angleterre. . . . Dans*

la seule paroisse de Marybonne, qui est la plus grande et la plus peuplée de l'Angleterre, on en comptoit, il y a quelques années, treize mille, dont dix-sept cents occupoient des maisons entières à elles seules.

Such a picture of social vice in the metropolis is a sad commentary upon the tendency of the young women of the country districts to drift to the city. The "lights o' London" had already begun to possess that fascination for the weak in morals, the light-headed and frivolous, which has made them a wrecker's beacon on a rockbound shore, luring to destruction untold hosts of inexperienced country youth. Nor was the drift Londonward due altogether to the fascination which the gay and pleasure-pandering city possessed, for there were not wanting methods of enticement such as are still employed, in spite of legal penalties. The example of city dwellers of outward respectability did not tend to elevate the moral tone of those who came fresh from the country, with its purer home life; for while the sanctity of the home was an appreciable fact of the seventeenth century, it was much less so in the metropolis and in the cities generally than it was in the country.

A notorious fact that attracted the notice of continental visitors to England was that lax morality prevailed in many English families. Muralt, a Frenchman, even asserts that he found it customary for husbands generally to maintain mistresses and also to bring them to their homes and place them on a footing with their wives. This is doubtless an exaggerated statement of the case; but when the king was not faultless, the people were apt to pursue folly. Although no king after Charles II., except George II., disgraced the nation by the profligacy which he exhibited, yet Charles's successor, James II., kept a mistress, as did most of the kings following him.

Referring again to Fielding, we get what is probably a truer picture of the times in this respect than could be penned from the hasty observations of a traveller. A young fellow who has led astray his landlady's daughter is addressed by his uncle in the following manner: "Honour is a creature of the world's making, and the world has the power of a creator over it, and may govern and direct it as they please. Now, you well know how trivial these breaches of contract are thought; even the grossest make but the wonder and conversation of the day. Is there a man who afterwards will be more backward in giving you his sister or daughter, or is there any sister or daughter who would be more backward to receive you? Honour is not concerned in these engagements." It need not be supposed that such sentiments were general; but that they were all too prevalent is manifested by the literature that mirrors the times.

Drinking and swearing, the coarse associations of the alehouse, the obscene jokes and sallies which were indulged in freely in such places and made up a great part of the conversation, were conducive to a very low moral standard for men, and there was nothing in the times to lead women to uphold higher ideals of conduct than those which were imposed upon them by the male sex. Consequently, they were accustomed to a lower standard than would be tolerated to-day; but as libertinism was largely concerned with the outcast element of society, the women of the homes were not called upon to sacrifice integrity of character for its satisfaction. So that the lower moral standard was set up for men, and a woman who would attempt at once to maintain her respectability and follow such courses would very soon have found that difference in standards for the sexes visited a stricter condemnation upon her than upon the male delinquent.

The testimony of foreigners to the chastity of the English matron quite coincides with that which comes from English sources. Le Blanc remarks: "Most of those who among us pass for men of good fortune in amours would with difficulty succeed in addressing an English fair. She would not sooner be subdued by the insinuating softness of their jargon than by the amber with which they are perfumed." Another observer, of the same nationality, speaking of the unassailability of the English woman, attributes it to the insurmountable rampart which she had in the love for her family, the care of her household, and her natural gravity, and says that he does not know any city in the world where the honor of husbands is in less danger of deflection than in London.

The social hypocrisy of the eighteenth century, as it relates to woman, was due to the failure as yet to place the sex in correct adjustment with the times. Instead of considering her as having serious qualities and value other than the realization of matrimony, everything that entered into woman's life pointed in that one direction. The art of pleasing was not cultivated as an opportunity of the sex due to their special graces of spirit and of person, which might legitimately be employed for their own sake to make the world happier and brighter. There was not afforded to men the restfulness and pleasure in the company of women which would serve as a delightful foil to the practical and anxious cares of their daily lives; nor were women taught to believe in themselves as capable persons in the spheres of life in which feminine personality, taste, and touch best affect and mould civilization. Except in a few notable cases, literature and art, to say nothing of science, were outside of woman's sphere, because she neither believed in herself nor was seriously regarded by men as a factor in any of the wide relations of life other than those

which were involved in her sex. The arts of the toilette, conversation, and deportment were all in which she was considered to need to be adept. Where naturalness was suppressed, it is not strange that the young women should have been influenced by false standards; false modesty, false sensitiveness, false ignorance, were depended upon to give them the artlessness and innocence of deportment which should recommend them to the blasé men of the times.

The estimate in which the sex was held was not quietly accepted by all women; although the new woman had not appeared upon the horizon, there were not wanting women who realized that their position was a humiliating one, and who sought to create a sentiment for its betterment. Mary Astell was one such, and the case as presented by her shows the superficiality of the conventional routine of a woman's life. She says: "When a young lady is taught to value herself on nothing but her cloaths, and to think she's very fine when well accoutred; when she hears say, that 'tis wisdom enough for her to know how to dress herself, that she may become amiable in his eyes to whom it appertains to be knowing and learned; who can blame her if she lays out her industry and money for such accomplishments, and sometimes extends it farther than her misinformer desires she should? . . . If from our infancy we are nurs'd upon ignorance and vanity; are taught to be proud and petulant, delicate and fantastick, humourous and inconstant, 'tis not strange that the ill effects of this conduct appear in all the future actions of our lives. . . . That, therefore, women are unprofitable to most, and a plague and dishonor to some men, is not much to be regretted on account of the men, because 'tis the product of their folly in denying them the benefits of an ingenuous and liberal education, the most effectual means to direct

them into, and secure their progress in, the ways of virtue."

A French writer criticised the Englishmen of the day for their failure to avail themselves of the refining influence of women, in whose graces, he affirmed, there could be found constant charm and a certain sweetness peculiar to the sex. He said that the conversation of the women would polish and soften the manners of the men and enable them to contract a manner and tone which would be agreeable to both sexes; and he ascribed the bluntness of the English character to this lack of the refining influence of female society.

As women were left so largely to their own devices, failing the comradeship of men, they gave themselves over to the needle as the chief resource for idle hours. *The Female Spectator* protested against this excessive needlework on the part of women: "Nor can I by any means approve of your compelling young ladies of fortune to make so much use of the needle, as they did in former days, and some few continue to do. . . . It always makes me smile when I hear the mother of fine daughters say: 'I always keep my girls at their needle;' one, perhaps, is working her a gown, another a quilt for a bed, and a third engaged to make a whole dozen shirts for her father. And then, when she had carried you into the nursery and shown you them all, add: 'It is good to keep them out of idleness; when young people have nothing to do, they naturally wish to do something they ought not.'" With such a narrow circle of interest, it was not strange that women who had leisure should have wasted it in frivolity.

Gambling among women of fashion was more a result of too much leisure and too little intellectual stimulus than an indication of vicious propensities. *The Female Spectator,* from which we have quoted, in an article in 1745, relating

an account of the visit of a country lady to a London friend, furnishes an illustration of the extent and effects of the vice. The article recites that after knocking a considerable time at the door of her friend's house,—the hour was between eleven and twelve o'clock in the day,—a footman, with his nightcap on and a general appearance of having risen from the dead, responded to her inquiry for her friend, in the interim of his yawns: "We had a racquet here last night, and my lady cannot possibly be stirring these three hours." The surprised visitor refrained from asking any questions concerning this unintelligible answer, and, after leaving her name, returned again at three o'clock. She had the good fortune to be admitted, and found her friend at her chocolate. She had a dish of this in one hand, and with the other she seemed to have been busy in sorting a large pile of guineas, which she had divided in two heaps on the table before her. Rising, she greeted her visitor with great civility, and expressed regret at the latter's disappointment on first calling, saying, with a smile, that when her friend had been a little longer in town, she would lie longer in bed in the morning. She then enlightened her as to the term "racquet," telling her that when the number assembled for cards exceeded ten tables the game was so styled; if fewer, it was called a "rout"; and if there were but two tables, it was a "drum."

It must always appear a curious and an unfortunate circumstance that at the time of the great industrial awakening in England in the last half of the eighteenth century, when men, women, and children were losing their individuality and becoming mere industrial units, representing so many pounds of human energy to be added to a machine, the women and children of the factories and of the hovels of the factory towns cried piteously to the Church for bread and received but a stone. And this was at a time when the

social needs were so great and the sympathies of all other classes seemed to be alienated by diversity of interest from those who were called upon to toil for the making of England's wealth. Professor Thorold Rogers, the painstaking and acute investigator of England's industry, says with regard to the lethargy which constituted a veritable Dark Age for the English Church: "It is hard indeed to see what there is to relieve the darkness of the picture which the Anglican Church presents from the death of Queen Anne to the time of the Evangelical Revival. Over against the Anglican Church, formal, jealous of laymen, fearful of schism or irregularity, should be set the nonconformist churches." Although there was a great deal of religious enthusiasm in the religious communities of the Commonwealth, the principal branches of the Protestant nonconformists soon became wedded to their own systems, and, in a way, as narrow in their application of the principles of the New Testament as the church from which they had separated. It was not until the last quarter of the seventeenth century that a movement began which opened the way to lines of development which have been going on ever since. The vast number of present-day religious societies, whether in direct connection with the Church or outside of its pale, may be traced in some ways to the period just before and during the reign of William III.

Then arose societies for the reformation of manners in all parts of the kingdom. These societies represented the early stirring of the spirit of reform which found its expression in so many forms of activity in later times. They resembled somewhat the modern societies for the correction of social evils, such as societies for the prevention of vice, or societies for preventing the corrupting of the youth. It was all done under the impulse of religion, but was not initiated by the Church; it was a lay movement. The first

distinctively women's movements in religious matters were outside of the Church. The great preacher Whitfield attracted the attention of the Countess of Huntingdon, whose drawing rooms were thrown open for his preaching and were filled by fashionable auditors. Other titled women joined the countess, and among them was the famous Duchess of Marlborough. The interest of noble-women in a movement essentially plebeian has its parallel in the nineteenth century, when the Salvation Army enlisted the interest and support of women of rank and title.

The attitude of the countess in her loyal support of the new evangelical movement brought her under the criticism that is always encountered by a zeal which is not understood by people generally. The Duchess of Buckingham wrote to her: "I thank your Ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so at variance with high rank and good breeding." The Countess of Suffolk on one occasion was so incensed at a sermon of Whitfield in the Countess of Huntingdon's drawing room, that she rushed out of the house in a passion, under the impression that the discourse was a personal attack. The attitude of the clergy generally to the Methodist movement within the Church was one of indifference.

The suffering among the wives of the inferior clergy, who were impoverished and suffered under the defeat of the endeavor to make their scanty resources meet the

demands of household expenses, the lack of opportunity for educating their children, and their own loss of self-respect, must have made their lives more miserable in some ways than those of the wives of the potters, whose sphere of existence and needs were much more limited. One of the clergymen of this order plaintively sets forth his pecuniary distress as follows: "Oh, my Lord, how prettily and temperately may a wife and half a dozen children be maintain'd with almost £30 per annum! What an handsome shift will an ingenious and frugal divine make, to take by turns and wear a cassock and a pair of breeches another! What a primitive sight it will be to see a man of God with his shoes out at the toes, and his stockings out at heels, wandering about in an old russet coat and tatter'd gown for apprentices to point at and wags to break jest on! And what a notable figure will he make in the pulpit on Sundays who has sent his *Hooker* and *Stillingfleet,* his *Pearson* and *Saunderson,* his *Barrow* and *Tillotson,* with many more fathers of the English Church, into limbo long since to keep his wife's pensive petticoat company, and her much lamented wedding ring!" Such a picture belongs rather to the latter part of the eighteenth century than to its beginning, for in its earlier days the Church was prolific of quiet scholars and antiquaries, in both parsonage and manse, living peaceful, comfortable, and cultured existences.

The attitude of the Church of the eighteenth century toward women is hardly one of record, as there was not enough animation or interest displayed in social conditions —or, indeed, during a part of the century, enough of intellectual comprehension—to serve the Church for any discrimination as to women's status. When the change of attitude of the Church in respect to its indifference toward that element of its body which before the Reformation,

and continuously since then, has been so serviceably employed by the Roman Catholic Church did occur, it was the High Church party which brought it about, and so preserved for English Protestantism the work of women.

Although the Church was indifferent to the great mission that lay before it in the eighteenth century,—a mission that had to be met by the raising up from the laity of men and women who should stand for the spiritual rights of the lower orders of society especially,—there was a notable band of Christian philanthropic women who brightened the close of the century.

By harnessing human compassion to social needs, the distressed classes of society came to be lifted to that position of betterment which is theirs to-day, largely through agencies that owe their beginnings to the More sisters, Elizabeth Fry, and Harriet Martineau. It is always a pleasing task to turn to such women as these, exemplifying as they do the attainments of the sex in those peculiar and special ways which so well represent the adaptations of women. The greatest woman who graced the annals of helpfulness of the last half of the eighteenth century in England was Hannah More. The beautiful devotion of her long and honorable life to the cause of teaching, and the widespread interest which, by her writings, she attracted to the subject both in Europe and America, place her at the source of one of the mighty streams of pervasive influence that have ever permeated human society. So great was her appreciation of the character and the position of woman, that she was able to forecast well-nigh everything that has been enunciated in modern times with regard to the place of the sex in education and in society.

Hannah More was born in 1745, in a little village near Bristol. Her father, who was the village schoolmaster, gave his five daughters educations adapted as near as

might be to the peculiar talents of each. Three of the girls opened a boarding school in Bristol, when the oldest was only twenty years of age. This school soon became fashionable and ultimately famous. It was to this institution that the early labors of Hannah More were given, and it was here that she attracted the attention of such men as Ferguson the astronomer, the elder Sheridan, Garrick the tragedian, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, and indeed nearly all men of eminence in intellectual and state life. But her associations were not solely with the fashionable world, by which she was petted and flattered, for she turned her attention to labors for the poor and the ignorant. She sought to do for the children who lived amid the savage profligacy of the peasant class what Madame de Maintenon sought to do for girls of the aristocratic class in her country. Both alike aimed to offset the perversion of character which threatened the girls of their respective schools, from different sources, but to the same end,—their destruction. Madame de Maintenon worked to counteract the insidious infidelity that permeated the upper walks of life—Hannah More, to counteract the practical atheism of the lowest plane of life. The fundamental principle of her educational system was the necessity of Christian instruction. She recognized the close relationship of education and religion, and gauged well the significance of the historical fact of woman's debt to Christianity for her elevation. The question which she asked was not that of social utility, but that of personal character. She saw too much of the utilitarian principle in its actual workings, the reducing of human life to the plane of mechanism, to permit her to base her educational efforts upon a utilitarian foundation. She sought to cultivate that "sensibility which has its seat in the heart rather than in the nerves." Anything which detracted from modesty or

delicacy, or tended to make a girl bold or forward, she severely rebuked. She taught the wastefulness of expending time upon the cultivation of a talent which one does not possess, and held that excessive cultivation of the æsthetic range of subjects contributes to a decline in those more stable factors upon which is based the security of states. Neither indelicate exposure of the person in style of dress nor extravagance in dancing found favor at her hands. Such were some of the views which were entertained and promulgated by the woman who created an epoch in the attitude of society toward her sex. She taught the dignity of womanhood, from which the duties of domesticity cannot detract, the performance of them as a function of womankind being of all things honorable. The pure common sense of Hannah More did for the women of her time the service which had failed of performance by the Church.

Passing from the theoretical to the practical part of Hannah More's work, it is interesting to see her putting into effect her philanthropic labors. The people among whom she labored were destitute of almost everything that makes life comfortable. Among the Mendip Hills, out from Bristol, lived a wild, barbarous, lawless population, compared with which the millers and the colliers of the mines were mild and tractable. Among these people Hannah More established her schools. Some of the children had already had the schooling of the prison, and all of them had been tutored in vice beyond comprehension for persons so young. Hannah More's schemes were regarded by many as visionary and impracticable, and received opposition from sources where sympathy and helpfulness were to be expected. Gradually, however, her school work was extended until it covered an area of twenty-eight miles.

In the Sunday schools the children received religious instruction, and in the day schools they were taught to spin flax and wool. No missionary bishop travelled more constantly, no Methodist itinerant cultivated his circuit district more assiduously, than did Hannah and her sister Patty More their lay diocese. The many difficulties which had to be overcome by them cannot be appreciated by workers among the destitute to-day, with all the appliances and books and methods which represent a century's experience in such lines. Nothing of the sort was to hand for these sisters; but Hannah More was an author as well as a philanthropist, and the tales for the interest and instruction of the children she wrote herself.

While Hannah More lived and worked in the eighteenth century, her life's service extended over into the nineteenth century also. She was a contemporary of Miss Mitford, Mary Carpenter, Mrs. Summerville, and Maria Edgeworth. The eighteenth century brought forth the women who were to carry into the nineteenth century the elements of service for society, which were to be like the seed sown in good ground and to bring forth the maximum fold of fruitage.

The national system of education had not been developed in the eighteenth century, making the acquirement of an education somewhat dependent upon individual circumstances as affected by personal ambitions. There was nothing in the way of general education for women. But the dawn of better things intellectually was shown by the development of a group of women of literary comprehension and productivity, who formed a set apart and yet were in a real sense prophets in a wilderness, proclaiming the democracy of letters. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu writes very bitterly of the low esteem in which was held the intellectuality of the sex, and, in speaking of the study

of classics, says: "My sex is usually forbid studies of this nature, and folly reckoned so much our proper sphere we are sooner pardoned any excesses of that, than the least pretensions to reading or good sense. . . . Our minds are entirely neglected, and, by disuse of reflections, filled with nothing but the trifling objects our eyes are daily entertained with. This custom so long established and industriously upheld makes it even ridiculous to go out of the common road, and forces one to find as many excuses as if it was a thing altogether criminal not to play the fool in concert with other women of quality, whose birth and leisure only serve to render them the most useless and most worthless part of the creation. There is hardly a creature in the world more despicable or more liable to universal ridicule than a learned woman! These words imply, according to the received sense, a tattling, impertinent, vain, and conceited creature. . . . The Abbé Bellegarde gives a reason for women's talking over much: they know nothing, and every outward object strikes their imagination and produces a multitude of thoughts, which, if they knew more, they would know not worth thinking of. I am not now arguing for an equality of the two sexes. I do not doubt God and nature have thrown us into an inferior rank; we are a lower part of the creation, we owe obedience and submission to the superior sex, and any woman who suffers her folly and vanity to deny this rebels against the laws of the Creator, and indisputable order of nature; but there is a worse effect than this, which follows the careless education given to women of quality—it's being so easy for any man of sense, that finds it either his interest or his pleasure to corrupt them. The common method is to begin by attacking their religion: they bring a thousand fallacious arguments their excessive ignorance hinders them from refuting; and, I

speak now from my own knowledge and conversation among them, there are more atheists among the fine ladies than among the lowest sort of rakes." This bitter plaint of a lady of quality, with its humiliating acknowledgment of the inferiority of her sex and the hopelessness of that inferiority, sounds very pathetic in the light of the present-day estimate of woman and her acknowledged equality with man in all matters, saving only in the exercise of the public functions for which the advocates of the full programme of woman's rights contend.

It is not surprising that women of intellectual gifts grew morbid under a sense of social inferiority; it is not strange that they hid their light under a bushel, and were afraid of acknowledging their talents or their aspirations, when men regarded learning for their daughters "as great a profanation as the clergy would do if the laity should undertake to exercise the functions of the priesthood." In matters intellectual, woman was negative. She must not embarrass her superiors by displaying in their presence indications of talent or evidences of learning; her theories and opinions were not worthy of statement or consideration in the presence of the male sex. Her gentility was one of breeding, but it did not involve the brain. Of necessity the intellectual development of woman in such a mental atmosphere was slow. Her elevation was dependent upon an awakening of thought in all departments of life. There was lacking an incentive to intellectual industry when the fruits of such toil might not be enjoyed.

Under such adverse conditions, the names of the women of exceptional intellectual gifts in the eighteenth century constitute a roll of honor worthy to be inscribed in every hall of learning devoted to the education of women. This literary coterie included, besides Lady Mary Wortley

Montagu, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Parker, Mrs. Vesey, Hannah More, Mrs. Chapone, Elizabeth Carter, and Miss Talbot.

Lady Montagu was of an aggressive nature, and well fitted to conquer difficulties rather than to despair in their presence. She was a good classical scholar, a student under Bishop Burnet, and was abreast of all the thought of her time. She is credited, among other things, with the courage to introduce the system of inoculation for smallpox, having had her son so treated.

Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu was an insatiable devotee of society, and abounded with a fund of mirth for the enlivenment of the dullest company. In her correspondence, amid a lively flow of chatter, she introduces discussions of Dr. Middleton's *Life of Cicero* and other critical and historical allusions relating to the classic authors, and evinces familiarity with such literature. Again, she is found descanting in a critical vein on the qualities of Warburton's *Notes on Shakespeare*. Her observations upon English history are appreciative of its distinguishing features. In these remarks she says: "In some reigns, the kingdom is in the most terrible confusion, in others it appears mean and corrupt; in Charles II.'s time, what a figure we make with French measures and French mistresses! But when our times are written, England will recover its glory; such conquests abroad, such prosperity at home, such prudence in council, such vigor in execution, so many men clothed in scarlet, so many fine tents, so many cannon that do not so much as roar, such easy taxes, such flourishing trade! Can posterity believe it? I wish our history, from its incredibility, may not get bound up with fairy tales and serve to amuse children, and make nursery maids moralize." The same light touch and whimsical insight displayed in this quotation are evidenced in all her writings.

It matters not the subject—balls or books, flirtations or syllogisms, the same delicate vein of humor runs throughout them.

Miss Carter, the particular friend of Mrs. Montagu, frail in health and devoted, a beauty, a wit, a brilliant conversationalist, was yet of a much more retiring disposition than was her friend. She created no Hillstreet and Portman Square assemblies, although she was by no means a recluse; and even if she did not have so strong a social following as Mrs. Montagu, her presence possessed charm for those who assembled about her. She had a wide acquaintance with literature, and patronized the libraries extensively; her linguistic accomplishments included French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and, most rare acquirement in those days, German. She was discriminating in her literary tastes, and is found commenting upon German books of fiction. She says that they are dangerous for young people, for the reason that they possess the singular art of sanctifying the passions. Mere sentimentality was repugnant to her feelings, and she dismissed from her attention a German book, with the expression: "A detestable book, but I know of no other in German that is exceptionable in the same horrid way."

Mrs. Vesey was another literary character whose salon, made thoroughly delightful, was frequented only by persons of the greatest culture. Just how the name *bas-bleu* came to be identified with the assembly which Mrs. Vesey gathered about her is not known. One explanation which was current at the time attributes the term to a foreign gentleman who was invited to go to either Mrs. Montagu's or Mrs. Vesey's, and was assured as to the informality of the occasion by an acquaintance, who told him that full dress was quite optional, and, in fact, he might go in blue stockings if he was so minded. Other accounts do not

agree with this; one lays the phrase at the door of Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, the naturalist, who always wore blue stockings; but it is asserted by Miss Carter's biographer that Stillingfleet died before the name came into vogue. Hannah More, in some whimsical lines, describes a *bas-bleu* assembly:

> "Here sober Duchesses are seen,
> Chaste wits and critics void of spleen:
> Physicians fraught with real science,
> And Whigs and Tories in alliance;
> Poets fulfilling Christian duties,
> Just Lawyers, reasonable Beauties,
> Bishops who preach and Peers who pray,
> And Countesses who seldom play,
> Learn'd Antiquaries who from college
> Reject the rust and bring the knowledge;
> And hear it, *age*, believe it, *youth*,—
> Polemics really seeking truth;
> And Travellers of that rare tribe
> Who've seen the countries they describe."

The brilliant woman who gathered about her such a representative gathering of celebrities as is suggested by these lines—an assemblage in which Dr. Johnson could discourse in one corner on moral duties, and Horace Walpole amuse another group with his lively wit, while the younger portion discussed the opera or the fashions—was the daughter of Sir Thomas Vesey, Archbishop of Tuam. By her second marriage—with a relative, Mr. A. Vesey—she resumed her maiden name. Prominent persons, other than those mentioned, who were attracted to her salon were Burke, Pulteney, Garrick, Lord Lyttleton, Dr. Burney, and Lord Monboddo.

Women were not only given to shining in exclusive social circles, but brilliant representatives of the sex were keenly interested in the political trend of the times. The Duchess of Marlborough was one of the most notable and

politically active women of the age of Anne. This was a time of ascendency in politics of the Dissenters, who are described by Burton in his history of that age as a clog upon the free movements of the complicated machinery of British social and political life. Another of the famous women at court was the Countess of Suffolk, who appears in Swift's correspondence as Mrs. Howard. These women were thoroughly informed as to the political movements of their time, as is revealed by their correspondence; and they, with others as noteworthy, often shaped state policy. Among names which appear prominently in the political movements of the century are those of the Countess of Bristol, Mrs. Selwyn, who was one of the ladies of the bedchamber to the queen of George II., Lady Hervey, and the Duchess of Queensborough. The latter declared herself so wearied of elections that, in all good conscience, they ought to occur only once in an age. The Countess of Huntingdon, the supporter of Whitfield, the Duchess of Devonshire, and other women of position, had vital interest in public questions.

The interest which English ladies took in politics was a matter of constant surprise to foreigners, but it was significant of the awakening to a sense of privilege which led in the next century to the various female declarations of rights, of which the most extreme was the claim to suffrage.

Chapter XIV

The Women of the Nineteenth Century

XIV

THE WOMEN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

AT the opening of the nineteenth century, practically unfettered opportunity extended in all directions before women; but it was necessary for the century to spend its force before they had fully availed themselves of the privileges which were objected to only by those who still descanted on woman's sphere as a purely domestic one. The "woman question" is very modern, because woman has so lately come to be seriously regarded as a factor in the work of life. The changed conditions of the nineteenth century resulted from those forces which were operating for the larger liberty of the sex. Contributions to the widening of the scope of their lives came from many sources. Religion has been the evangel of woman; but even it cannot claim that the modern woman, with her versatility of touch and her multiform influence, is its product. Law reluctantly acknowledged the rights of the sex where it was futile to deny them; but it has sinned too grievously in the years that are past to receive recognition as a promoter of the new Renaissance, although it cherishes the rights which woman has achieved, and is to-day one of her most chivalrous defenders. Convention is too unadaptive to do more than recognize adjustments which have been otherwise brought about, but, as representing the rules of society, it is promotive of the dignity

and the rights of the sex to the extent that these dignities and rights have been otherwise afforded.

Acknowledgment for the position which woman attained during the last century is due not to any one of these forces, but to all working together, although Nature must be chiefly credited with having brought it about. The great increase in population in England, and the excess of the female portion, led women to ponder the question of other spheres for their lives than solely the domestic. At the same time, the complex nature of modern business offered, to some extent, a practical solution of the problem. While the question of woman's sphere was greatly agitated, and was academically and forensically debated pro and con, women themselves were practically settling the matter at issue by accepting positions in commercial life, with little regard to the censure of critics or the praise of friends. The independence shown by women, their self-assertiveness, indicated that their failure previously to break into the outer world of affairs was not due to the force of convention, but to the lack of opportunity. Their excess in the population of the country afforded them strong ground for the claim, which they practically made in accepting the opportunities of business life,—that the sphere of domesticity was not open to them all. It is not a question as to whether woman is or is not in her sphere outside of the home or the limited circle of æsthetic following; for the time of theorizing is already past, and women have become so identified with industry as to preclude the possibility of a return to the narrower life. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum* is the motto of woman to-day, and has been from the early part of the nineteenth century. She is in the line of progress, and following her manifest destiny. The fears of the faint-hearted and the regrets of the conservative cannot alter the established fact that the practical

status which women achieved in the nineteenth century is theirs, to be recognized and furthered.

The views prevailing in the nineteenth century with regard to matrimony were not greatly different from those of the eighteenth: it was considered just as discreditable to be an old maid, and marriage was the goal of existence for young women; but there was a portion of the sex who were willing to brave the aspersions cast upon them and to remain single—when the opportunity to do otherwise was not wanting—in order that they might follow careers which offered to them greater interest or profit. It was inevitable that such choice should lay them open to the charge of unsexing themselves and of being recreant to that *esprit de corps* of womankind which finds its common interest in the achieving of matrimony. Women would never have wrought out their independence of action if there had not been a great widening of life's opportunities. The ease of locomotion, abundant opportunities for education, and the lightening of domestic labor by inventions, were the important factors which made it possible for women to step out into the avenues of active business. The middle-class women, who were thrust out into the arena of life, were still the women who best preserved the pure idea of marriage. They were not subjected to the temptations which assailed those in the higher and the lower ranks of society, and, being less affected by tradition, they wrought out for themselves independent ideals. The marriage of convenience of the higher ranks and the marriage of necessity of the lower were not the forms which were common to the middle-class women. Unaffected by either of these influences, they regarded well the character of the men to whom they were to plight their troth, and were not disposed to pass over the weaknesses of suitors. Marriages were no longer contracted at

the early ages of fifteen and sixteen years, which had been commonly the case heretofore. A bride under twenty-one was thought very youthful.

The entrance of woman into the ranks of labor has not been uncontested, for she has been charged with taking the bread out of the mouths of husbands and fathers; and, by working for much less wage than is given the men, she has been thought dangerously to affect the standard of payment for men's work. Just what will be the effect of the innovation of woman in industry cannot at present be stated, as she has not as yet gotten into normal and recognized relationship to men as a sharer of their work. One effect, however, of woman's contact with the other sex in the brusque business world has been to reduce her claim to special consideration in the way of the amenities which were accorded her at a time when she was not nearly so sincerely respected as she has become in recent years. A modern writer has summed up the matter in the following words: "Not the least among the changes is that effected by the fuller and freer life led by all women. A greater companionship and friendship is permitted them with the other sex; there is a larger sharing of interest, and women are expected to have a higher standard of education and to conceal their knowledge and culture with tasteful skill. Their interest in the political life of the country, and their acknowledged usefulness in their place in the working out of the political machine, the works, philanthropical and social, which are admitted by all to be within their sphere, have broadened and deepened the stream of life which is common to both sexes, and brought the social life on to a different level."

This broadening influence brought greater recognition of woman's activities in social and philanthropic measures and a corresponding increase of responsibility on her part.

There are many women of this century whose noble deeds will never be forgotten, but one may be singled out as a splendid example of self-sacrifice and devotion to others. Mrs. Elizabeth Fry was a Quakeress of gentle birth, though the mother of a large family, she made the condition of the social outcasts her constant care. She was, in truth, a worthy successor to John Howard. The moral and physical degradation and suffering of the inmates of prisons particularly appealed to her compassionate nature, and she set herself the task of alleviating their condition. Her first visit to Newgate Prison was in 1813; alone and unprotected, she entered the pandemonium where nearly two hundred women were confined, among them some of the most degraded and desperate of their sex. Mrs. Fry's sincere compassion, gentleness, and purity conquered these women. Four years later she organized an association for the reformation of female prisoners. Though her name is chiefly associated with the reform of prisons and prisoners, her philanthropy embraced the promotion of education of the needy, religious movements, the cause of freedom, and private charity. The influence of this good woman was widespread, and her labors were not confined to her own country, but extended to the continent of Europe.

One of the most striking of the phenomena of modern life which came about in the nineteenth century is the fusion of classes, making it increasingly difficult to use class definitions. The passage from one to another has become so easy as to make mobility the principal characteristic of modern society. Travel, education, art appreciation, and home decoration are not confined to any section or class. The degree of luxury of living, and not the distinction between luxury and lack, is the only way to set aside one circle of society from another. A result of this wider diffusion of the comforts of life has been the

awakening of the altruistic spirit, which finds expression in many and varied benevolences—so many, in fact, that the danger of the times is over-organization. This tendency, if pursued, will react to the disadvantage of women by depriving them of a sense of personal responsibility and individual initiative.

The assumption by society, as a whole, of the responsibility of its members of necessity gives an organized form to all efforts for its improvement. The nature of problems of this sort requires wide organization in order to bring into touch with the social need, for its satisfying, as many persons as possible of means and talent. If the philanthropist is rich, she employs her money as the expression of her interest in and recognition of her duty toward society. If not wealthy, but possessed of time and talent, the woman herself becomes the instrument of social amelioration, and the money from the coffers of others is placed in her hands for judicious expenditure. The great interest in philanthropy which in modern times is evinced by all classes of society tends to unite the women of to-day in a bond of common sympathy and purpose. It is not solely because they have more abundant leisure than men that the burden of philanthropy rests upon their shoulders, for their wider sympathy and clearer insight lead them to perceive more readily and to meet more effectively the needs of mankind.

One of the prominent women of England who gave herself largely to benevolent labors was the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. The generous and wise use of her immense fortune has secured her an enduring name; she built churches, she founded charities; and although London was the chief field for her philanthropy, her native country of Ireland was remembered in a way to shrine her name there in grateful memory. She possessed the spirit

of the great ladies of old England, who felt a responsibility toward the dependent and necessitous classes about them, and to this spirit she gave the wide expression her fortune and her exceptional environment made possible. The great variety of her benevolent sympathies and the personal part she took in the various charities which enlisted them cause her life to mark an era in the history of philanthropy. There was nothing beyond the catholicity of her spirit.

The modern temperance movement, which enlisted largely the interest of the women of England and America, and which led, in the latter country, to the organization of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, found its best representative in England in the person of Lady Henry Somerset. Lady Somerset's efforts in behalf of temperance and social reforms in England are too much matters of present-day knowledge to need more than a notice of them in these pages; they have enrolled her name in the list of great women of the century, where it had already been long placed by the affections of a nation. Another expression of the interest of women in society is found in the Young Women's Christian Association, Girls' Friendly Society, the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, and other organizations which care for the interests of young women exposed to imposition or temptation. It is impossible to enumerate even the more important of the organizations which owe their institution to women and are conducted by the sex for the benefit of society. Wide as has been the field in the past, new phases of modern life are constantly coming under the purview of women's societies, which, although to a large extent voluntary, are none the less splendidly organized and disciplined forces, occupying, for the most part, independent fields.

Woman as a nurse is not a new aspect of her nature, but not until the last quarter of the century was nursing elevated to the dignity of a profession. There were not wanting women who bore the title of professional nurse, but these did not have the training to justify the name. Before the Crimean War there were upward of two thousand five hundred such nurses in England. Florence Nightingale, whose name will ever be identified with the founding of schools for nurses, said: "Sickness is everywhere. Death is everywhere. But hardly anywhere is the training necessary to relieve sickness, to delay death. We consider a long education and discipline necessary to train our medical man; we consider hardly any training at all necessary for our nurse, although how often does our medical man himself tell us, 'I can do nothing for you unless your nurse will carry out what I say.'" The revelation of suffering on the part of uncared-for soldiers which Miss Nightingale brought back from the Crimea profoundly moved English society; and a large sum of money was presented to her, with which she founded the Nurses' Training Institution at St. Thomas's Hospital. At about the same time, the Anglican sisterhood founded training schools of a similar kind. From these sources arose the sentiment for trained service for the sick which has led to the wide respect with which modern society regards the nurse who has been thoroughly trained for her profession. This feeling toward nurses is in striking contrast to the one which prevailed before the days of special training: that which was once considered a degrading occupation has come to be thought of as an ennobling ministry. In 1870, the date of the founding of the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association by the Duke of Westminster, James Hinton, in a paper in the *Cornhill Magazine* on "Nursing as a Profession," called attention

to this new activity as a trained service for women: "It is considered, though an excellent and most respectable vocation, not one for a lady to follow as a means of livelihood, unless she is content to sink a little in the social scale. . . . Can any one think it is, in its own nature, more menial than surgery? Could any occupation whatever call more emphatically for the qualities characteristically termed professional, or better known as those of the gentleman and the lady? . . . Here is a profession, truly a profession, equal to the highest in dignity, open to woman in which she does not compete with man."

Nursing no longer has to be defended as a suitable occupation for the sex, for in its ranks can be found women of all grades of society; it is one of the levelling influences of modern times, as well as one of the most elevating of callings. No other sphere of public activity has opened up to woman in which she has not met the opposition of men. Nursing is a striking instance of the modern trend toward specialization, which is but another term for professionalism. Consonant with the whole spirit of the times, the amateur nurse was relegated to the background by the modern trained nurse.

Society, however, has not taken so kindly to women's departure in another direction: women as physicians are still regarded as a novelty and a doubtful expedient. Nursing created a profession, and so conservative sentiment did not have to be met; but the old faculties of law, medicine, and theology had been so long intrenched in their privileged places in relation to society that any attempt to widen their confines or to enlist their hospitality toward innovations is met with the resistance which custom and precedent always present to novelty. Although their progress into the medical profession has been slow, yet the nineteenth century records the opening of this calling

to women. During the last quarter of the century women were admitted to the ranks of accredited practitioners. Yet, the vocation is not a novel one for the sex, for in the remote past they have been looked upon as possessing knowledge and skill in the treatment of diseases; but, as we have seen, the woman who followed the art of healing as a profession was often regarded as in league with the powers of evil. Down to the nineteenth century, women never held any recognized place as practitioners, excepting in the capacity of midwives.

In the eighteenth century there were, outside of the recognized profession, a number of women who practised medicine with considerable success; but, although skilful, they would be regarded to-day as mere quacks. Mrs. Joanna Stephens, who proclaimed that she had found a remarkable cure for a painful disease, appears to have been so successful in her treatment of cases as to enlist genuine respect for her attainments. Parliament voted her a grant of five thousand pounds sterling. Mrs. Mapp, commonly termed "Crazy Sally," who had repute as a bonesetter, received from the town of Epsom the offer of an annuity of one hundred pounds sterling if she would remain in that neighborhood. She was such a popular character that the managers of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre sent her a special request to attend a performance at which they desired to have a large audience. She complied, and the attendance was satisfactory.

Early in the century there was a renewal of attempts which had formerly been made to require women who practised obstetrics to come under some form of registration; but when the matter came before Parliament, in the form of an enactment prepared by the Society of Apothecaries, a committee of the House of Commons reported that "It would not allow any mention of female

midwives." Although women were not received into the regular profession as qualified practitioners until after the middle of the century, they were under no legal prohibition to practise medicine; but in 1858 the passage of the Medical Act, which required a doctor to qualify by passing the examination of one of the existing medical boards, set up a barrier to women, as it placed them subject to the discretion of the boards, which unanimously refused to admit them. The only exceptions to this rule were made in favor of those persons who had received a medical degree abroad and had been practising before the passage of the act. It was in this way that Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell became registered. Miss Elizabeth Garret, whose studies did not begin till two years after the compulsory registration law, was also enrolled under exceptional conditions.

At last matters came to an issue, and a notable struggle occurred which marked an era in the medical profession of England in its attitude toward female practitioners. The case of Miss Sophia Jex-Blake brought on the contest. She applied to the London University for admission, and was informed that the charter of that institution had been purposely framed to exclude women who sought medical degrees. Returning to Edinburgh, she exhausted every legal resource in a combat with the authorities, and was signally worsted. The plucky fight she made won the admiration of Sir James Simpson, the dean of the medical faculty, and others, but Professor Laycock observed to her that he "could not imagine any decent woman wishing to study medicine; as for any lady, that was out of the question." Success finally crowned persistent endeavor, and, the University Court having passed a resolution that "Women shall be admitted to the study of medicine in the university," Miss Jex-Blake and four other ladies passed the preliminary examinations for entrance. Other women

soon entered the open door; but the contest was not yet ended, for, after these ladies had pursued their studies for three years and paid the fees, they were informed by the University Court that no arrangement could be effected by which they could continue their studies with a view to a degree, instead of which they were offered certificates of proficiency; the latter, however, would not be recognized by the Medical Act. They then took legal measures to secure redress, and followed the matter up by a bill in Parliament, which was lost. In 1876 another bill was introduced to enable all British examining bodies to extend their examinations and qualifications to women, and this became a law. A number of colleges availed themselves of the privilege and opened their doors to women, until at the present time there are medical schools for women in a number of the principal cities in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

The advance of women in the professions was in line with the general widening of the educational horizon of the sex. Partly as the result of her broader education, and partly as a cause of it, there was a juster appreciation of the relative position of the sexes, and into this there entered as well the new economic measure of value. Society was no longer regarded as a congeries of individuals, but as an organism, and an organism whose function was chiefly the creation of wealth. This broader economic estimate of society could but be favorable to women, whose valuation as a part of the commonwealth was largely regulated by their utility. The ideal of political economy is that everyone shall be employed, and employed at that for which he is best adapted, under the condition of freedom of self-development. The prevalence of such truer theories of society aided in dispelling the mists of error which had surrounded the popular notions

as to women. Buckle observes, in his *Influence of Women on the Progress of Knowledge,* that women are quicker in thought than men, and he says: "Nothing could prevent its being universally admitted except the fact that the remarkable rapidity with which women think is obscured by that miserable, that contemptible, that preposterous system called their education, in which valuable things are carefully kept from them, and trifling things carefully taught to them, until their fine and nimble minds are too often irretrievably injured."

The close of the nineteenth century witnessed a complete revolution in the constituents of girls' education. French, dancing, flower painting, and music no longer comprised a young lady's accomplishments. The fear of singularity, which was a social bugbear to the young women of other generations, no longer served to prevent them from studying classics and mathematics and science. To-day, they are expected to add their quota to the contribution of the times, in thought as well as in the graces of deportment. The latter can no longer atone for the absence of the former. It is no more the case among the middle classes that only the girl who intends fitting herself to take the position of governess needs an education above the rudiments and the embellishments. Not the least of the departures in the educational scheme for women is the notable change of attitude which has taken place with regard to the development of their bodies. It is but recently that physical training has entered into the curriculum of colleges, but it is even more recently that an opinion has prevailed favorable to the physical culture of women.

Before the educational revolution occurred, women were making their mark in intellectual spheres. In 1835 the names of two women, Mary Somerville and Caroline

Herschell, were enrolled as members of the Astronomical Society. In its report containing the recommendation of the election of these ladies, the council of the society observed: "Your Council has no small pleasure in recommending that the names of two ladies distinguished in astronomy be placed on the list of honorary members. On the propriety of such a step from an astronomical point of view, there can be but one voice: and your Council is of opinion that the time is gone by when either feeling or prejudice, by whichever name it may be proper to call it, should be allowed to interfere with the payment of a well-earned tribute of respect. Your Council has hitherto felt that, whatever might be its own sentiment on the subject, or however able and willing it might be to defend such a measure, it had no right to place the name of a lady in a position the propriety of which might be contested, though upon what it might consider narrow grounds and false principles. But your Council has no fear that such a difference could now take place between any men whose opinion would avail to guide that of society at large, and, abandoning compliments on the one hand, and false delicacy on the other, submits that while the tests of astronomical merit should in no case be applied to the works of a woman less severely than to those of man, the sex of the former should no longer be an obstacle to her receiving any acknowledgment which might be held due the latter. And your Council, therefore, recommends this meeting to add to the list of honorary members the names of Miss Caroline Herschell and Mrs. Somerville, of whose astronomical knowledge, and of the utility of the ends to which it has been applied, it is not necessary to recount the proofs."

Mrs. Somerville suffered from the educational limitations of her day, and when she desired to learn Latin, in

order that she might study the *Principia,* she referred to Professor Playfair with regard to the propriety of her doing so, and was assured by him that there was no impropriety involved for the purpose she had in mind. At that time there were many women with the best of education, acquired outside of university halls, but such were usually brought up by scholarly parents possessed of well-stocked libraries. To-day, the position of Ruskin is a commonplace of experience. In his lecture on the *Queen's Gardens,* he advised that women have free access to books, and asserted that they would find out for themselves the wholesome and avoid the pernicious with an instinct as unerring as that which directs the browsing of sheep in pasture lands. It has been sufficiently demonstrated that wholesome-minded girls are ever less in danger of contamination from literature than are their brothers.

The opening of Queen's College in 1848 marked the beginning of an attempt to give a wider education to women. This college grew out of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution. It was a training school for teachers, a normal institute; but, besides this, it was open to all who cared to enter. The name of that leader in modern educational movements, Frederick Denison Maurice, was identified with this departure. In the face of hostile comment, he defended the system which was adopted by himself and his brother professors, all of whom had come from King's College. The educational opportunities offered by this college were exceptional; the fees were low, and many students hastened to avail themselves of the new privilege.

It was twenty years later, however, before there was fought out the issue through which women came to be admitted to the universities. In 1856, Miss Jessie Merriton White was applying vainly for admittance to the matriculation examination of the University of London. In 1869,

Girton College, the building of which cost fourteen thousand seven hundred pounds sterling, was established largely through the efforts of women. It was intended to afford training for women along university lines, and the plan of study was modelled on that of Cambridge University; the idea in the adoption of this parallel course was to establish beyond doubt women's fitness for pursuing the same studies as men. Other colleges of the same nature were founded soon after.

In the last century, the old theory that women were not capable of higher education on account of the "moisture of their brains" was not one of the pleas upon which was based the opposition to the higher education of women. The more plausible ground was taken that women ought to avoid certain lines of study which are a part of a university course. But it is coming to be realized that the proprieties of knowledge do not reside in the subject or in the sex of the student—that whatever is important for higher investigation is worthy of the pursuit of women as well as men, and can be pursued by them at the point of ripened discretion to which they have arrived when capable of meeting the requirements for entrance into a university.

The high-school system that has developed in England during the last quarter of a century has done much for the education of the middle classes, affording sound instruction and mental discipline for all. At the present day, poor girls, who, if they were dependent upon their personal resources, would never acquire an education, have wider facilities than were enjoyed by the women of the aristocracy a century earlier.

Of those who promoted the secondary education for girls, perhaps no name among female educators in England stands higher than that of Frances Mary Buss. Her

splendid powers of organization and administration raised to such a degree of efficiency the private school which she had established in the north of London, that, when the Brewers Company desired to invest a sum of money for the education of girls, it entered into negotiations with Miss Buss and acquired her establishment, retaining her as head mistress.

Voluminous as are the works of women in the realm of fiction, it is nevertheless a field little exploited by them until recent years. In the eighteenth century the sex had produced few historians, poets, or essayists who could be compared with the group of romance writers which included such names as Catherine Macauley, Eliza Haywood, Elizabeth Carter, Fanny Burney, Mrs. Inchbald, and Mrs. Radcliffe; but when we pass to the nineteenth century, while women as romanticists are more prominent than women as authors in any other field, there is no limit upon the versatility which they exhibit, and all branches of literature have felt their moulding impress. To take the names of women out of the list of authors of the nineteenth century would be to diminish the glory of the literary skies by blotting out the lustre of some of its brightest constellations.

Beginning with Jane Austin and continuing to Mrs. Humphry Ward, the line of literary descent in the realm of fiction is a roll of honor for womankind; but it is a far cry from these to that earliest of women novelists, Mrs. Aphra Behn, who, at the direction of Charles II., wrote her novel *Oronooko,* the purpose of which was not dissimilar to the social end which Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe had in mind in her *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Thus, the sixteenth century is brought into touch with the nineteenth, although the connecting links were few and slight until the middle of the latter. The number of women novelists

indicates that women have found in fiction the line of literary pursuit which is most agreeable to their tastes and adapted to their natures. There seems to be absolutely no limit to the range of subjects which women are capable of working up in romance; whether in novels of incident or novels of character, treating historical or social subjects, didactic or imaginative themes, with the plot in any period of time, among any people or set of conditions, women writers appear to be equally at home.

While the vast majority of literary women have been writers of fiction, every branch of literature numbers in its promoters the names of eminent females. In poetry and in dramatic literature women have not achieved the fame of men. Lord Byron gave as the reason for women's apparent lack of imaginative and creative power that they had not seen and felt enough of life. As translators, editors, compilers, as writers on social topics and current questions, as well as on educational subjects, memoirs, travels, literary studies, they have been prolific and excellent workers. Besides which, they have given to journalistic and magazine work their special capabilities.

Women no longer fear to write under their own names, and do not resort to pseudonyms as did Charlotte Brontë, and Mary Ann Evans—George Eliot. It was at one time thought that the demands of research and study outside of the range of ordinary feminine acquaintance precluded the sex from doing many forms of intellectual work which were open to men. Fiction did not present special difficulties; and as the line of least resistance, as well as that of especial adaptation, women took to this form of writing.

At the present day, however, there is no question as to woman's faithfulness, accuracy, and ability to attend to detail; and so there are no lines of research or of authorship in which women are not engaged. This is in part

due to the similar lines upon which women and men are now educated. Their broad acquaintance with the whole range of intellectual subjects eminently fits the sex for special work in any department. To distinguish by their method of treatment the writings of women is no longer possible. Their pens have the same grace and vigor of style as those of men, while there is no fineness or daintiness of touch in their writings which does not find counterpart in those of men.

The fiction of the century reveals woman intrepidly discussing political, economic, and labor questions with a large degree of assurance, and others with a great deal of acuteness and insight. Although there is intense competition in the realm of literature, yet the complexity of modern society, the universality of education, the opportunities of leisure for reading, the social demands for acquaintance with standard and recent works, and the incitement to reading given through the newspapers, magazines, book reviews, and lectures of the times, furnish unlimited opportunities for gifted women to exercise their talents in writing.

It was not until 1861 that women were admitted to all the privileges and opportunities of art education which centred in the Royal Academy schools. In that year these were opened to women students. It is interesting to notice how in almost an accidental manner the limitations placed upon women were removed. At the annual dinner of the Academy in 1859, Lord Lyndhurst felicitated those present on the benefits which were conferred upon all her majesty's subjects by the Academy schools. Miss Laura Herford, an artist, wrote to Lord Lyndhurst and pointed out the fact that half of her majesty's subjects were excluded. This made the discussion of the propriety of admitting women a kindly one, and a memorial was

prepared and signed by thirty-eight women artists, copies of which were sent to every member of the Academy, praying the admission of women and pointing out the benefit it would be to them to study, under qualified teachers, from the antique and from life. It was regarded as impracticable that women and men should study life subjects together, and the request was refused. There was nothing in the constitution of the Academy either for or against the admission of women. A drawing with the signature "L. Herford" was then sent in by Miss Herford, and it was admitted by a letter addressed to "L. Herford, Esq." The question then arose whether a woman who had been accepted as a man should be allowed to enter. Miss Herford had her way.

No women had been admitted into the Academy since the days of Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser. The reason for their non-reception, as assigned by Sanby in his *History of the Royal Academy of Arts,* and quoted by Georgiana Hill in her *Women in English Life,* is as follows: "One or two ladies, if elected members, could scarcely be expected to take part in the government or in the work of the society; and as the practice even of giving votes by proxy has long since been abolished, the effect of their election as Royal Academicians would be, virtually, to reduce the number of those who manage the affairs of the institution and the schools in proportion as ladies were admitted to that rank: and as long as the number of Associates is limited, a difficulty would arise in the fact that the higher rank has to be recruited from that body." Miss Hill regards this as a grievance, because it virtually makes the matter of sex a disqualification, and quotes with endorsement Miss Ellen Clayton, as follows: "The Academy has studiously ignored the existence of women artists, leaving them to work in the cold shade of utter

neglect. Not even once has a helping hand been extended, not once has the most trifling reward been given for highest merit and industry. Accidents made two women Academicians—the accident of circumstances and the accident of birth. Accident opened the door to girl students—accident, aided by courage and talent. In other countries, they have the prize fairly earned quietly placed in their hands, and can receive it with dignity. In free, unprejudiced, chivalric England, where the race is given to the swift, the battle to the strong, without fear or favour, it is only by slow, laborious degrees that women are winning the right to enter the list at all, and are then received with half-contemptuous indulgence."

Whether or not women artists have a real grievance against the Royal Academy, certain it is that the last half of the nineteenth century has been notable for the progress of women in art. It was in the galleries of the Society of Lady Artists, which came into existence in 1859, that Lady Butler first exhibited and pictures by Rosa Bonheur were displayed. With the multiplicity of art schools and every facility for obtaining instructions under the most favorable conditions, women have been brought into prominence as artists. Landscape, portrait painting, oil, water-colors, pastel—the whole range of subjects and styles of painting includes pictures of merit by women.

In many of the lesser branches of art, hundreds of women have found congenial vocations. They have shown excellent taste and aptitude in china painting and other forms of decorative work—in book illustration, as designers of carpet and wall-paper patterns, as preparers of advertisements, designers of calendars, and a host of other minor art industries.

Women as musical composers had appeared in the last half of the eighteenth century. Mrs. Beardman, who made

her début as a singer at the Gloucester festival in 1790, was equally gifted as composer, singer, and pianist. Ann Mounsey displayed early talent, and her precocity brought her into notice when she was but nine years of age. In her maturity, her compositions gave her high rank among female composers, and in 1855 her oratorio *The Nativity* was produced in London. She was a member of the Philharmonic Society and also of the Royal Society of Musicians. Another gifted woman, whose talents brought her early into notice and who was a member of the Royal Academy of Music, was Kate Fanny Loder. She had been instructed in piano-forte by Mrs. Lucy Anderson, teacher to Queen Victoria when she was princess and afterward to the children of her majesty. Miss Loder was a king's scholar at the Royal Academy, and when but eighteen years of age was appointed professor of harmony at her *alma mater*. Eliza Flower—whose sister, Mrs. Adams, wrote the words of the hymn *Nearer, my God, to Thee*—was another of the gifted composers of the century, and her name appears as the author of many hymn tunes.

To give the names of all the women composers of hymn tunes would be to give a history of hymnology in modern times, for there is no sacred song collection but embraces the compositions of many women gifted in music. To give the names of those who have figured in opera would involve a history which includes a great many more foreign artists than English; but without seeking to do more than mention a few of those whose names have figured in popular favor as operatic *prima donnas,* and omitting particular mention of their individual capabilities, there are some names which suggest themselves to the patrons of the opera as worthy of first mention in the list of England's great singers. Catherine Tofts, Anastasia Robinson, Lavinia Fenton,—afterward Duchess of Bolton,—

achieved celebrity in the opera during the first thirty years of the century. Lavinia Fenton was the heroine of *The Beggars' Opera,* which took London by storm. The names of Catherine Hayes and Louisa Pyne are still treasured by those whose recollections go back to the forties.

The general ill repute under which the stage rested in the seventeenth century continued to hang about it throughout the eighteenth. There was still a great deal of license allowed spectators, and it was not unusual for them to pass on the stage and behind the scenes. The rude and boisterous conduct of the patrons of the theatre made it extremely unpleasant for persons of refinement to attend it. The city streets had not yet become well protected, and the degree of security which is now afforded to pedestrians was lacking in the eighteenth century. It was out of the question for any gentlewoman to attend the theatre unaccompanied by male escort. There were always loiterers about the streets, and any man of rank whose character was bad enough to permit him to do so felt at liberty to salute a woman with insults—which, when they came from such a source, were then styled as gallantries; and women who adopted the stage as a profession, being looked upon as having forfeited their claims to gentility, were regarded as fair game by the rakes of the day. Notwithstanding the attempts of Queen Anne to reform the manners of theatre-goers by the passage of edicts looking to that end, the evils which made it so unpleasant to a respectable person to attend the theatre and which brought the playhouse under odium continued to be flagrant.

In the nineteenth century came a great uplift of the status of the stage and workers upon it, and, in contrast to the opinions which prevailed in the eighteenth century, an actress suffered no disparagement and had the same

opportunity for cherishing her reputation as any others of the sex. The stage no longer brought its followers into disrepute, for it rested with the actress herself to preserve or to tarnish her character. She was no longer, by virtue of being an actress, regarded as a Bohemian, and it was not considered a regrettable thing for a girl of character to enter upon a histrionic career. It was her course and conduct after she had entered the profession, and the nature of the plays in which she appeared and the parts which she allowed herself to present, that determined the public verdict with regard to her. As a result of the changed character of the theatre,—although it was by no means cleared of all the odium that had so long attached to it,—a larger number of men and women attended dramatic performances than ever before.

The introduction of women into commercial life was followed by the opening up of civil service appointments and a change of sentiment with regard to women engaging in trade. In 1870, when the government bought the interests of the telegraph company, the officials were brought under the existing civil service rules. Some of them happened to be women, and thus, inadvertently, women were admitted to civil service appointments under the government. In 1871 the postmaster-general bore striking testimony to the efficiency of the women employed in his department. When commenting upon the transfer of the telegraphs from private control to post office direction, he said: "There had been no reason to regret the experiment. On the contrary, it has afforded much ground for believing that, where large numbers of persons are employed with full work and fair supervision, the admixture of the sexes involves no risk, but is highly beneficial." Then, remarking upon the better tone of the male staff by reason of their association with women as fellow

employés, he added: "Further, it is a matter of experience that the male clerks are more willing to help the female clerks with their work than to help one another; and on many occasions pressure of business is met and difficulties are overcome through this willingness and cordial coöperation."

The experience of employing women in the post office was duplicated in other departments of the public service, until it has become a recognized fact that women can be employed in connection with men without any of the results which it was apprehended would follow the departure. In the country districts, postmistresses and female carriers are not a novelty. It was the post office which first opened up to women employment under the government, and its various departments now utilize them extensively. Although other of the public services have received women as clerks, their position is still in a measure tentative, but it can hardly be said that the employment of them by the government is any longer an experiment. In addition to the large numbers of young women who have found employment in the government service, there is no railroad company, insurance company, or any other large semi-public or private business firm or company, which has not found women to be of peculiar serviceability. The great number of women who, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, fitted themselves for business careers indicates not only a change of ideal, with a realization of their self-sufficiency, but the increased adaptability of women to the peculiar conditions of modern society.

It is no longer a curious phenomenon to see the name of a woman upon a business letterhead, or on the sign over some large commercial establishment, for frequently, when their husbands die, women themselves now take in hand the business interests of the deceased and conduct

them with marked success, and with no question from their business competitors as to the propriety of their so doing. Nor do such women forfeit the esteem of society. Society as such is no longer concerned chiefly with matters of pedigree, but more largely with the question of prosperity. While it would be asserting too much to say that the nineteenth century witnessed the iconoclastic shattering of the old aristocratic ideals, nevertheless, while the woman of blood maintains her rightful place in the select circles of society, the door stands ajar for women who have no other claim for recognition than that they have amassed fortunes, or inherited them, or are the wives of wealthy men. However, they must not have clinging to them the odor of their humble beginnings, if they rose from lowly walks of life. The real test applied to them is not the test of breeding, which relates to the past, but of gentility, which is the measure of the present life.

Besides the women who managed large business interests in their own names, the nineteenth century witnessed the advent of the business woman in numerous lines of small trade. To name the various kinds of business in which women are found making for themselves a sustenance would be to give a list of the many lines of retail trade; but the shopwoman of the earlier part of the nineteenth century is quite a different person from the tradeswoman of the latter half. Instead of a small, obscure shop, conducted in a hesitating, apologetic manner, to-day women are as aggressive advertisers, make as fine displays in their shops, and sustain the same business relations with the wholesale dealers, as do the retail dealers of the other sex. Beyond any peradventure, women have become a part of the business organism of England, and are competing upon terms of equality with men for the patronage of the public; and they have before them just

as hopeful prospects of amassing a competence for an easy and independent old age.

Great as is the army of women who enrolled themselves in the ranks of commerce and clerkship during the nineteenth century, they are in a minority as compared with the greater host of industry,—the women who are found in the factories, working upon the raw materials of human comforts and luxuries, toiling unremittingly and often under hard conditions for a mere pittance as compared with the value of their products. In 1895 there were one hundred thousand women in England holding membership in the various trade unions, and, besides these, a far larger number who were without such enrolment, such as fifty-two thousand shirtmakers and seamstresses and four hundred thousand dressmakers and milliners; and these were but a mere fraction of the immense host of women who, outside of the home, found themselves earning their own bread by their personal labor. With the growth of manufactures, women were drawn from the rural districts. It became an uncommon thing, where formerly it was the usual practice, for women to perform the work of field laborers, or to depend chiefly for support upon butter and cheese making, or service at the inns or in the shops of the neighboring towns. It is now only the women of the lowest rank who devote themselves for a livelihood to berry picking, hop picking, garden weeding, and like menial outdoor services.

The competition of women with men in manufactures was greeted at first with the sullen resentment and open opposition with which machinery was viewed when first introduced; but as women have been drawn into manufactures, men have absorbed many of the outdoor duties which formerly fell to woman's lot in the country districts. The "bakeresses," "brewsters," and the "regrateresses"—

retailers of bread—are now known simply in the history of industry; their names have become archaic and their offices obsolete. As machinery took the place of the individual intelligence of the handworker of other days, leaving only a monotonous series of mechanical manipulations for the men, aside from the superior skill called into play by the complexity of the machinery, which demanded expert and intelligent direction, women found relegated to them the simplest parts of factory work and those which did not require any large degree of mentality. As a result, the women of the factories have not developed coördinately in intelligence with their sisters in other lines of active work. This has unfortunately led them to be looked down upon as inferior to girls who work in stores or in offices. As the factory laws came to be framed with regard to greater investigation and regulation of the conditions of women's work in factories, many of the abuses were to a degree corrected. It is not now commonly the case that a self-respecting operative is without redress if subjected to the coarse insults of brutalized foremen, nor are women now permitted to work as formerly under conditions so harmful to their peculiar constitutions. Better sanitation, fewer hours of employment, and greater regard for their comfort, have done much to brighten what was in the early part of the nineteenth century the dreariest life to which any woman could be chained.

Along with the improvements in the condition of women's labor have gone improvements in the housing of factory people. The industrial evils that brought out such chivalrous champions of the poor as the younger Lord Shaftesbury and his associates no longer generally prevail in factory life. There yet remains much to be done for the congregated women and girls of the factories. It was inevitable that by the bringing of them together in

great numbers, many from homes of abject poverty where they had none of the benefits of careful training, and by the herding of them together in factories where the nature of their work did not furnish employment for their minds, the moral tone of the young women of daily toil should have been lower than that of their sister workers in other lines. But the dictum of Lord Shaftesbury has been sinking into the social consciousness, and has borne splendid fruit in the improvement of the conditions of factory work for women. "In the male," says he, "the moral effects of the system are very bad; but in the female they are infinitely worse, not alone upon themselves, but upon their families, upon society, and, I may add, upon the country itself. It is bad enough if you corrupt the man; but if you corrupt the woman, you poison the waters of life at the very fountain." In the first half of the nineteenth century, the actual number of women employed in factories appears to have been larger than that of men.

The existence of the factory, drawing out from the homes so many women and making their home life only a secondary consideration and an additional burden, presents one of the gravest problems of modern times—a problem that must be approached harmoniously by the philanthropists and the legislators if it is to be satisfactorily solved. Habit begets contentment, so that it is not the employés of the factory who feel most keenly the unfortunate circumstances of their existence. It is the social reformer, whose one aim is not the uplifting of the individual as such, but the betterment of the individual as the unit of the social fabric, who is most concerned for the betterment of the town life of England. As to the women themselves, when they are compensated by extra wage they have no complaint to make about the long hours; indeed, they sometimes even prefer the factory and the excitement

of their surroundings to the dreary and forbidding prospect of their desolate tenements. One unnatural result of women's work in factories is the reversal of the positions respectively of husband and wife in the home. It is not an extraordinary occurrence for women to go out to the factories and earn the bread of the family, while the men remain at home to mind the babies and care for the house. This begetting of shiftlessness in men, who are buoyed up to the point of self-supporting labor only by the dependence of their families upon them, is an incidental but a significant result of factory life upon women. It is seriously to be doubted that, in the aggregate earnings of the family, there is any real compensation for the binding of wives and children to the wheel of toil. It has been observed by careful students of industrial conditions that, for one reason or another, the maximum wage of a family and the degree of comfort in their living are not, ordinarily, greater than that of the family whose sole wage earner is the husband.

There is not a concurrence of views as to the wisdom of special legislation with regard to the industrial place of women. Some see in the various acts passed to regulate the circumstances of their employment a distinct gain, while others view all such enactments as a regrettable interference of the state in a matter where it is not capable of taking cognizance of all the circumstances involved and of displaying the broadest wisdom in dealing with the subject. Then, too, it is objected on the part of some that sex legislation is unwise of itself. The women themselves have not always looked with favor upon the passage of acts for the regulation of their labor, and often complain of such as an infringement of their personal privileges as adults. They complain that the competition of labor is already severe, and that by imposing upon

them the limitations of certain acts the difficulty of making a subsistence is increased. They complain against the association of female with child labor, and assert that the conditions are dissimilar and the abuses to be corrected cannot be classed under the same legislative conditions. Industrial legislation was first directed to the correction of offences against women on account of their sex, but the later enactments, and those most complained of, were resented because of their making the securing of a livelihood more precarious. The *Times* in 1895 pointed out that there were eight hundred and eighty thousand women affected by the Factories and Workshops Bill, introduced into Parliament in that year. The lack of flexibility of the measure, failing to take account of the different natures and conditions of the various employments affected, made it obviously unjust to the women employed in certain trades. Some industries have their seasons of activity and of dulness, while others fluctuate without regard to periods; and to class all such under legislation regulating the hours of labor at the same number for them all could but work injury to the women employed in such trades and disproportionate advantage to other women employed in industries pursued evenly throughout the year.

The crux of such contentions lies in the paternal attitude of the state to the female sex. The expediency of depriving women of the same amount of liberty to regulate their own affairs as is accorded to men is a matter of doubt. Women feel that they can decide better for their own needs than can the legislators who have as their guide only industrial statistics, the petitions of well-meaning social reformers, and the views of those who claim expert knowledge from the outside. Just what will be the outcome of the attempt to resolve woman into a normal relationship to modern industry without violation of the rights

of self-direction and protection, which she claims as her prerogative, and at the same time to preserve society from the social blight of the reduction of considerable numbers of workingwomen to prostitution and abandoned living, remains to be determined by the wisdom and experience of the twentieth century.

One of the most curious of the industrial problems at the front in the nineteenth century was the servant question. While the wheels of work were set to moving with more or less smoothness in all other ways, this important wheel in the domestic machinery has never run without friction, jarring to the nerves of housewives. Such women find a common bond of sympathy in the incompetence and dereliction of their domestics; domestics find a common subject of interest in their grievances against their mistresses. The whole matter is almost ludicrous, because it is one simply of adjustment. After the sex has asserted for itself a position in the realm of industry not inconsistent with the self-respect which it has sought to maintain, the women who work in the kitchens and the chambers of other women sullenly resent the imputation of their menial status in so doing. Just why the modern servants should be looked upon as inferior to other women workers is a difficult question, for their close relation to their mistresses would appear to give them an individuality which the "hands" in a factory do not possess. The line of demarcation between the domestic employers and employés is not always a clearly pronounced one, for it not uncommonly occurs that those who themselves employ a maid send out their own daughters to similar service. The low regard in which servants are held, and the application to them of this very term, which carries with it an implication of ignominy, is responsible for the poor grade of efficiency, intelligence, and character found among domestics

as a class. There is no reason, in the nature of the case, why a young girl with intelligence and fair education should not self-respectingly take domestic service, and rank above factory hands and many of her sister workers in inferior clerical positions.

In earlier times domestic work fell largely to men. The kitchen work which now is performed by scullery maids was done by boys and youths; and before the office of housemaid had been established, that of chamberlain signified the service of men for the work which maids are now employed to do. The very titles of those who are connected with the person of majesty signify the lowly household functions which were ordinarily performed by those to whom now fall the honors, but none of the duties, of those offices. In ecclesiastical households there were no women employed at all in former times, excepting "brewsters." The personal relationship which used to endear the tie between servant and mistress no more exists than it does between other working people and their employers. Instead of the idea of personal attachment, the monetary consideration is the only one that enters into the relationship. The maid is but a part of the machinery of the household, and must deport herself in a deferential and often an abject manner, assuming a mask of propriety which is thrown off as soon as she is among her companions, when the pent-up animosity and resentment find expression. How different the modern condition from that which obtained in other times, when a lady considered no one fitting to attend upon her excepting those who were of gentle blood and between whom and herself were ties of endearment and a measure of equality! Gentle maidens performed many household duties which to-day are disdained by young ladies of lesser position. The real "servants" did only the coarse and rough work

of the household. They had no particular place to sleep, and, even down to the time of Elizabeth, it was not thought important to provide regular beds for "menials" in the great houses—"As for servants, if they had any shete above them it was well, for seldom had they any under their bodies to keep them from the pricking strawes that ranne off thorow the canvas and raxed their hardened hides." The servants who were thus treated were, of course, the antecedents of the present-day servants. It is from the traditional attitude toward them that much of the present-day spirit of superiority toward domestics is derived. During the eighteenth century the condition of domestics improved, and, during the last quarter, the description of them, their tastes and their manners, is such as would be quite applicable to-day. Already the scarcity of good servants had come to be a matter of domestic concern. The lament of the lady of to-day, that her maid dresses as well as she herself, is not a new one, for it is met as far back as the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century Defoe remarks upon the same fact. He says, writing in 1724: "It would be a satire upon the ladies such as perhaps they would not bear the reading of, should we go about to tell how hard it is sometimes to know the chamber-maid from her mistress; or my lady's chief woman from one of my lady's daughters." He adds that: "From this gaiety of dress must necessarily follow encrease of wages, for where there is such an expence in habit there must be a proportion'd supply of money, or it will not do." The same subject furnished concern for people generally, and a correspondent to the *Times* wrote, in 1794: "I think it is the duty of every good master and mistress to stop as much as possible the present ridiculous and extravagant mode of dress in their domestics. . . . Formerly a plaited cap and

a white handkerchief served a young woman three or four Sundays. Now a mistress is required to give up, by agreement, the latter end of the week for her maids to prepare their caps, tuckers, gowns, etc., for Sunday, and I am told there are houses open on purpose where those servants who do not choose their mistresses shall see them, carry their dresses in a bundle and put them on, meet again in the evening for the purpose of disrobing, and where I doubt not many a poor, deluded creature had been disrobed of her virtue. They certainly call aloud for some restraint, both as to their dress as well as insolent manner."

The great majority of domestic servants come from the rural districts, and upon entering into town life have no one to exercise any personal concern in their welfare, and, where they do not fall into worse courses, they acquire an extravagant and reckless habit of life that uses up their earnings simply in the furthering of their vanity or pleasure. The servant question, as that of women's position in the factory system of the country, presents problems which have proved as yet stubborn to all attempts at their solution.

One of the most curious facts of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the evolution of the "new woman." Women, representing all manner of social pleas, running the gamut of the extremes, sought a hearing upon the platform, in the pulpit, through the press, and in literature. It looked as if the Anglo-Saxon race were on the verge of a great revolution in which the men would, either passively or in strenuous opposition, be ignominiously relegated to the rear in the lines of new progress. The new movement grew out of a sense of social inequality on the part of some women, and this grievance was exploited in all ways and illustrated from all viewpoints. Some of

these strenuous advocates for the "rights" of the sex gave themselves over to the question of dress reform, and their diverse views represented the whole range of the question, from the sensible and sane declaration for the abolishment of the tyranny of style to the adoption of male attire. Others discussed the injustice to women from the physiological viewpoint, and affirmed that motherhood was not an honorable office, but a type of feudalism to men and a subservience to their wills that was highly dishonoring to womankind. It looked as though the household gods were to be tumbled out of the home without much ado; but while some of the advocates of reform went to absurd lengths and presented extreme views and sought by all the ingenuity of sophistry to present the status of woman as a most deplorable one, there were others, more moderate in their views and expressions, who felt that there might be a clear gain for women in the affirming of her rights in the matter of conventions which held over from the eighteenth century. Whether in deportment or in dress, in intellectual pursuits or in the province of amusement, women were to exercise their judgment and common sense and live in the light of their own reason and not with reference to the mandates of men.

When the "new woman" craze passed away, it left, as its effect, young women more self-reliant, more independent, a little more pert and self-assured, with less reverence and greater capability, than before. On the whole, the English girl of to-day has wrought out of the complex conditions of modern society the naturalness which was asserting itself throughout the eighteenth century, but was hampered by new conventions, rigid customs, and stately formalisms. It is true that the English girl of to-day would be to her grandmother a revelation, and

perhaps not an agreeable one; but the standards by which estimates are made are safest and most satisfactory when contemporary. It would be venturesome to forecast the view of the *fin de siècle* girl which may be taken at the close of the new century by those who shall cast back over the years a historical glance. Certain it is that, on the whole, she comes approximately up to the best standards of to-day, although a certain air of flippancy and the flavor of the independence of judgment, not always balanced by reason, suggest the possibility of an intellectual and spiritual trend not consistent with her most fortunate lines of development.

It will be seen that the twentieth century takes woman as a practical matter of fact, and proposes to bestow upon her no fulsome eulogies, chivalrous dalliance, to place her in no position of inferiority, or to exalt her to the transcendent estate of the celestial beings. She has demanded recognition in the practical affairs of life; she has claimed the right to determine her own destiny; she has achieved the freedom of the outer world. Lofty as are the summits of human ambition, she has climbed up to the very highest peaks and written her name in letters of immortality on the scroll of the great ones of the earth, in the arts, in literature, in philanthropy. Does she ever pause to take a backward look over the steps by which she has come to her present eminence? Does she ever consider the "pit from which she was digged"? It is a far cry from the twentieth century to the early dawn of history, and none but the Eye which runs to and fro throughout the whole earth can trace the entire course of woman's ascendency from degradation to exaltation. But it is always well to pause and to ask of the past years what report they have borne to Heaven; and the history of woman, studied in the light of fact and with such proper reflections as

historical circumstance suggests, must not only be a profitable one for the correction of any ill-balanced tendencies which may appear to close observation of woman in her present position and spirit, but it must as well be an important section of, and, in a sense, interpretation of, the social development of England.

Chapter XV

The Women of Scotland and Ireland

XV

THE WOMEN OF SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

THE women of Scotland are remarkable for the strength of their domestic sentiments and for their loyalty to the land of the heather. The stream of national life, by its merging and mingling with that of England, has never lost the individuality which has been the pride of the Scotch people in all their periods. Like two rivers meeting in confluence,—the one slow and clear, but steady and strong in its flow, the other, dashing and foaming its turbulent flood over the breakers in its rough channel,—refusing for a long time to do other than divide their common course until after long periods of associated flow they finally merge, still showing in their different shadings the mark of their diverse origin, so was it with England and Scotland. The union is complete, but national characteristics remain.

Not so, however, with unhappy Ireland. Fundamental differences in life, in temperament, in religion, in ideals, have served to perpetuate the alienation of a people whose connection with England might seem to depend on the power of but one principle—that of force. Not strange is it that among a people which considers itself deprived of a future the influence of the past should be predominant, and that in the recital of the mighty deeds of the Irish chieftains of yore should be found the chief delight

of those who mingle their tears at the shrine of such a representative of their national defeat as the patriot O'Connell.

With the curious contradiction of nature which infusion of Celtic blood effects, no livelier or more light-hearted race of women exists upon the earth than that of Erin, yet, at the same time, none which can be plunged so deeply into melancholy and feel so profoundly the pangs of sorrow. Not to original contributions of race characteristics, however, is this contradictory temperament solely to be attributed, but to the long years of denationalization which have made Ireland the wailing place of women whose traditions are glorious with the deeds of mighty queens and amazons like Macha, Méave, Dearbhguill and Eva; the dawn of whose cycles of religious glory is marked by the life and deeds of a Bridget.

To write a history of the women of Great Britain and not speak of the differences which the names Scot and Irish connote would be as grave an error as to describe the flora of the islands and omit mention of the shamrock and the thistle. Not that the flora of the island group is essentially distinctive any more than that the differences in society, in manners and customs of the separate peoples, are radical. It is not that there is much of diverse interest in the broad aspects of the life of the women that the recital of the history of the women of Scotland and Ireland is to have separate treatment, but to throw in strong light upon the pages of history the figures of women who belonged not to Great Britain, as such, but to Scotland or to Ireland, and who, if they date after the cementing of the union of the peoples, still perpetuate that which is distinctive in quality of life and of character.

To figure forth the famous women of these peoples will serve as sufficient commentary upon the effect of difference

of life and of customs. All else has entered into the story of the women of Great Britain as it has been told, for, after all, there is a real oneness between them.

The tribal influence in both Ireland and Scotland continued to be the predominant force of patriotic purpose long after the welding of its various elements had eliminated this influence in English life. In the earlier history of both the Scotch and Irish peoples, we have to do with the force in society of this family idea, centred in great chieftains and kings, but none the less a fact of prevailing influence, an idea incarnate that served to quell the strife of warring factions in the face of a common enemy. The patriotism of both peoples has been the patriotism of the family and the fireside. The love of the tartan among the Scotch and the perpetuation of the Irish clans attest this fact to-day.

Many are the pages of British history rendered glorious by the deeds of the women of Scotland. In those early days, when the light of history is too faint to show clearly their characters or their deeds, the women of Caledonia went forth to battle with men at the sound of the pibroch. Some of the noblest of them reigned as queens, were hailed as deliverers, or gave their blood in martyrdom to warm the soil of their country. The Scotch-Irish tribes accorded their women place in the deliberative bodies, and listened to their counsel. The magnificent virility which they displayed was not different from that of British women generally. The noble Boadicea was no more valorous than the Irish Méave. From the dim shadow land of the past must some of the characters of this recital be called up, but the Middle Ages and modern periods will be most largely drawn upon to tell the story of the Celtic woman, as a part of the chronicle of a country where, as we have fully seen, women have always counted as factors.

Macha of the Red Tresses is the first of the Irish queens whose figure stands out with sufficient boldness to fix it upon the pages of history. Would one marvel at her beauty or her prowess, let him have recourse to the praises of the early bards and the laudations of the chroniclers. We can well believe that, to her countrymen, she appeared as the incarnation of some divinity as she rode at the head of her body of stalwart warriors; her auburn tresses floating loose in the wind, her mantle flung carelessly over her shoulder, her neck and arms and ankles girdled with massive gold ornaments, her eyes flashing determination as she pointed the advance to the foray with her lance directed toward the foe drawn up in battle line to receive the charge.

A quarrel as to the succession to the throne or to the headship of the tribe, which was precipitated by the death of her father without posterity excepting this intrepid daughter, was the occasion of her appearance upon the page of national affairs, or rather of tribal history. She gained the victory over her adversaries, and ruled her people for seven years. The romantic annals of this valorous lady relate how she pursued the sons of her adversary to effect their destruction; and the more certainly to accomplish her purpose, she disguised herself as a leper, by rubbing her face with rye dough. Away in the depths of a dense forest she finds them cooking the wild boar they had just slain. Having successfully used her disguise to achieve her end, she rid herself of the leprous-looking splotches. With honeyed words and the judicious flashing of love-light from a pair of wondrous eyes, the supposed leper charms her enemies. One brother follows her into a remote part of the forest, where by guile she effects the binding of him hand and foot. Returning to the camp, she successively lures the remaining brothers

into the woods in the same manner and with the same result. She brought them "tied together" to Emhain. There, in a council of the tribe, womanly sentiment prevailed over sanguinary counsels, and, instead of being condemned to death, the prisoners were given over to slavery in the queen's following; and with the romantic ideas common to her sex, she had them build her a fortress "which shall be forever henceforth the capital city of this province." With her golden brooch she measured the bounds of the future castle, and it received the name "the Palace of Macha's Brooch." So runs the legend, and so is fixed by the brooch of Macha the first date in Irish history, at a period, however, when dates have little significance, for time meant but duration, and not economy or expenditure of force.

The romance of another of Ireland's early queens centres about the possession of a bull whose marvellously good points had awakened the queen's envy; the pastoral relates the contest which arose therefrom. This queen was the daughter of the King of Connaught, Ecohaidh by name, and her mother was the handmaid of his wife, the Lady Edain, who herself was a leader of great beauty and courage. The contest for the throne resulted in the elevation of Méave to the royal dignity. Before this, she had contracted marriage with a prince, with whom she lived unhappily. She returned to her father's court, and, after her coronation, married the powerful chief Ailill. The death of her husband and that of her father, which occurred at about the same time, left her solitary. The queen's misfortune in marriage did not deter her from seeking a further union. One day, the court of Ross-Ruadh, King of Leinster, was thrown into a great stir by the arrival of the heralds of Méave dressed in "yellow silk shirts and grass-green mantles," who

announced that the famous queen was on a royal progress throughout the land in quest of a husband suited to one of her state and character. She was fêted and catered to in every way, and finally fixed her choice upon the seventeen-year-old son of Ross-Ruadh, whose character promised enough meekness to insure the dominance over him of his much older spouse.

The event which the chroniclers make the prominent one of her reign had its origin in a heated dispute between the queen and her spouse as to their respective possessions. The result of the controversy was an actual inventory of their belongings. "There were compared before them all their wooden and their metal vessels of value; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their finger-rings, their clasps, their bracelets, their thumb-rings, their diadems, and their gorgets of gold; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their garments of crimson and blue, and black and green, and yellow and mottled, and white and streaked; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their great flocks of sheep, from greens and lawns and plains; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their steeds and their studs, from pastures and from fields; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their great herds of swine, from forest and from deep glens and from solitudes; their herds and their droves of cows were brought before them, from the forests and most remote solitudes of the province; and, on counting and comparing them, they were found to be equal in number and excellence. But there was found among Ailill's herds a young bull, which had been calved by one of Méave's cows, and which, not deeming it honourable to be under a woman's control, went over and attached himself to Ailill's herds."

Deeply chagrined that she had not in all her herds a bull to match this one, which seems to have been a remarkable animal, she asked her chief courier where in all the five provinces of Erin its counterpart might be found. He replied that not only could he direct her to its equal, but to its superior. The possessor of this animal was Daré, son of Fachtna of the Cantred of Cualigné, in the province of Ulster. Its name was the Brown Bull of Cualigné. Straightway was the courier, MacRoth, sent to Daré with an offer of fifty heifers for the animal, and the further assurance that, if he so desired, he and his people might have the best lands of what are now the plains of Roscommon, besides other valuable considerations, which included the permanent friendship of the queen herself.

Swiftly upon his errand sped the courier, accompanied by an impressive train of attendants. A friendly and hospitable reception and entertainment awaited them, and Daré accepted the terms they offered. One of the courtiers expressed admiration for the amiability of the king who thus consented to part from that which, on account of his power, the four other provinces of Erin could not have wrested from him. From this praise a cup-valorous associate dissented, and maintained that it was no credit to him, since, had he refused, Méave of herself could have compelled him to surrender it. The steward of Daré, coming in at this inopportune moment, heard the insulting vaunt, and went out in a rage and bore to his master the remark he had heard. Daré, in a passion of resentment, withdrew his offer, swearing by all the gods that Méave should not have the Brown Bull by either consent or force. Méave, on hearing of his determination, was correspondingly incensed, and without delay gathered together her forces and declared war upon Daré.

In a hotly contested battle, the army of Méave defeated that of her adversary, and the Brown Bull was carried back to her own country. According to the grave narrative of the chronicler, the issue of the bulls had yet to be fought out by the animals themselves, for no sooner did the captive bull come into the province of Connaught than there was precipitated a tremendous conflict with his rival, the bull of Ailill. The tale describes vividly and with much of fabulous admixture the contest, which resulted in the rout of the White-horned. Thus was the honor of Méave doubly sustained by the wage of battle.

This and many other strange narratives with regard to the undoubtedly historical Méave have vested her with a halo of romance, and so veiled her real personality that it is rather in her mythical than her historical character that she has come down to us; for there is little doubt of her being the original of Queen Mab of fairy fame. Spenser gathered much of his fairy lore in Ireland, and in the section where this famous queen lived and where grew up the mass of tradition and fable which must have appealed strongly to the imagination of the author of the *Faërie Queen*.

The intense religious character of the Irish people is not to be accredited to the persistence of superstitious influences and beliefs in the new garb of Christian enlightenment; for although their exuberant fancy has always peopled their land with races of malign as well as of amiable spirits, the real impress of religion is that which they received from early Christian sources. Bridget, the saint who heads the calendar of Irish women of sanctity, was born in the first half of the fifth century A. D., and survived until the end of the first quarter of the sixth. She it was who, despite the disadvantages of her sex, performed a work paralleled by but few persons in the

religious history of the country. It was inevitable that there should have grown up about her a fund of story and fable from which it is now difficult to distinguish in order to give her real work its full appreciation without sanctioning stories that have their roots in the soil of the fond fancy of a grateful people.

As one divests a rare parchment of its later writing in order that the original manuscript may be studied, so, when the after-traditions and the excrescences of the supernatural are removed from the character of Bridget, her real worth is seen and the value of the record of her life, which is thereby disclosed, is greatly enhanced. As to her learning, her blameless character, her wisdom, her charity, and her honesty, there is no manner of doubt. To swear by her name was to give to the asseveration the sanctity of inviolable truth.

It must be remembered that in the middle of the fourth century female monasteries upon the continent had aroused among women a great deal of religious enthusiasm. Already had the seeds of religion been sown in Ireland by Patrick, when Bridget came, imbued with the ardor of religious training and stimulation received upon the continent. The religious order for women which she instituted spread in its ramifications to all parts of the country. Many were the widows and young maidens who thronged to her religious houses; indeed, so great was the throng, that it became necessary to form one great central establishment, superior to and controlling the activities of numerous other establishments which were scattered throughout the land. She herself made her abode among the people of Leinster, who became endeared to her as her own people. The monastery she reared amid the green stretches of pasture received the name of Cill Dara, or the Cell of the Oak, from a giant oak which

grew near by, and which continued down to the twelfth century, "no one daring to touch it with a knife." On account of the monastery and its sacred surroundings, the section became the place of residence of an increasing number of families, and from the settlement thus begun arose the modern town of Kildare.

Such sanctity and devotion to good works as that of Bridget attracted to her monastery many visitors of note. Among those who esteemed it an honor to have her friendship was the chronicler Gildas. The Ey-Bridges, *i.e.*, the Isles of Bridget, or the Hebrides, according to the modern form of their name, claim the honor of holding in loving embrace her mortal remains. In this claim, however, they have a vigorous disputant in the town of Kildare, which claims the renown of her burial.

Passing from the vague borderland between legend and history, we come down to the twelfth century, when mediæval conditions were in full force and the manners and customs already described in connection with the women of the times had full hold upon their lives. As representative of the spirit of the period, the life of the renowned Eva, Princess of Leinster and Countess of Pembroke, may be briefly considered.

The history of the sad princess centres about the struggles of Dermot to regain the throne of Leinster, from which he had been deposed by the federated kings. First he equipped a body of mercenaries from Wales, only to be met with defeat in his endeavor to take Dublin from the enemy. He appealed for aid to the English king, Henry II., who was then engaged in a campaign in France. He did not receive direct help from that monarch, who himself was looking with covetous eyes upon Ireland, but he did receive permission to make recruits from among his Anglo-Norman subjects. His real aid came from the Earl of

Pembroke, called Richard Strongbow. With a large fleet, Dermot now set sail for Ireland, bent not only upon the recovery of his possession of Leinster, but the conquest of the whole island.

The consideration offered by Dermot to Pembroke for his services was the hand of his daughter Eva, with the kingdom of Leinster for a dowry. Waterford, a town then of equal importance with Dublin, was successively besieged and sacked; the Danes, who held it, were driven out with great slaughter. Amid all the horror of the sacked city was consummated the union of Eva and Richard, Earl Strongbow. Dublin became the place of their residence. A few years thereafter, the husband's checkered career was closed by a wound in the foot. In Christ Church, Dublin, lies the body of the warrior, and the monument displays the figure of a recumbent knight in armor, with that of his bride at his side.

The national struggles of Scotland are as replete with examples of illustrious women as those of Ireland; the tragedy of the lives of some of Scotia's daughters not only serves to mark the brutal spirit of times which, with all their superficial glorifying of the sex, yet could with good conscience make war upon women, but also serves to illustrate the height of feminine devotion when called forth by some great occasion with its demand for self-abnegation. Among such heroic characters must ever be honorably numbered the fair Isobel, Countess of Buchan, of whom the poet Pratt says:

> "Mothers henceforth shall proudly tell
> How cag'd and prison'd Isobel
> Did serve her country's weal."

The nine years which saw the struggles of a Wallace and a Bruce, from the appearance of the former as the

champion of Scottish rights to the crowning of the latter at Scone, were years big with the fate of a people full of heroic purpose and undaunted fortitude. The story of the national conquest must be sought elsewhere. In 1305, upon the death of Wallace, the younger Bruce was impelled to abandon the cause of the King of England, who had been pleased to name him in a commission for the direction of the affairs of Scotland. He made his peace with Red Comyn, the leader of the rival Scottish faction, and closed with him a pact on the terms proposed by Bruce: "Support my title to the crown, and I will give you my lands." The story of the perfidy of the treacherous Comyn and of the revolt of Bruce against Edward of England is well-known history. The actual crowning of the Scottish chieftain occurred on March 27, 1306. At that time appeared Isobel, wife of John, Earl of Buchan, who asserted the claim to install the king, which had come down of ancient right in her family.

With great pomp, this illustrious scion of the house of the Earls of Macduff led Bruce to the regal chair. The English chronicler crustily remarks: "She was mad for the beauty of the fool who was crowned." The English king was enraged at the presumption of his vassal, and sent out his soldiers against the Scottish sovereign. In the notable battle which followed, the forces of Bruce were routed and he himself made a fugitive. Other reverses befell the arms of the Scotch, and among those who were carried away captive to gratify the lust for vengeance of the English was the noble lady who had proudly inducted Bruce into the royal power. Isobel of Buchan was carried to Berwick, and condemned to a fate which can best be described in the words of an early chronicler: "Because she has not struck with the sword, she shall not die by the sword, but on account of the

unlawful coronation which she performed, let her be closely confined in an abode of stone and iron, made in the shape of a cross, and let her be hung up out of doors in the open air of Berwick, that both in her life and after her death she may be a spectacle and an eternal reproach to travellers." For four years she suffered the imposition of this heinous punishment, which was then mitigated to imprisonment in the monastery of Mount Carmel at Berwick. After three years she was removed to the custody of Henry de Beaumont. Her final fate is unknown, but it is presumable that, if she lived, her release from durance was secured by the victory of Bannockburn.

Amid the misfortunes which pressed thickly upon the house of those whose name, more than that of any other, is linked with Scotland's history—the mighty Douglases—must ever appear the sad-visaged Janet, Lady Glamis. When under the royal ban, remorseless as the will of fate, the house of Douglas was expelled from its native heath, a woman of unusual nobility suffered death in the general disaster to her kin. Gratitude is not a virtue of kings, or else there would have been some remembrance of that earlier lady of the Douglas line, Catherine Douglas, who, when the assassins upon midnight murder bent appeared at the chamber of the queen of James I., opposed to their entrance—fruitlessly, indeed, but none the less nobly—her slender arm, which she thrust into the staple to replace the bar that had been treacherously removed. The ambition of the Douglases, however, knew no bounds, and in actual fact their power often not only rivalled but overtopped that of the crown. The feud, with varying degrees of irritation and occasions of outbreak, had gone on until the time of James V., when the reverses suffered by the Douglases effectually destroyed their power and made them fugitives during the reign of that monarch. That

king had an undying resentment to the Earl of Angus, who had obtained possession of his person as a child and had continued to be his keeper until he finally slipped the leash to take up the sovereignty unhampered. One of the sisters of the mighty earl, in the flower of her youth, became the wife of Lord Glamis. While her kinsmen were in exile, she secretly did what she could to further their designs against the Scottish throne. Charges were formulated against her, but do not appear to have been pressed. Other actions against her for treason were instituted by her enemies, and she lived under continual harassment and apprehension of danger. All her property was confiscated as that of a fugitive from the law and one tainted with treason. Her enemies were not satisfied with the measure of revenge they had wrought upon her, and were content with nothing short of her life.

The venom of the persecution is shown by the nature of the charge which was trumped up against her to ensure her death. Four years after the death of her husband, she was indicted on the charge of killing him by poison. Three times the majority of those summoned to serve on the jury to hear the charges against her refused to attend, thus showing how little faith the popular mind had in the sincerity of the indictment against her. As it seemed impossible to secure a jury to hear the odious charge against an innocent and high-minded lady, the case was allowed to lapse. Soon after this she again married.

A description of her which was penned by a writer in the early part of the seventeenth century represents her as having been reputed in her prime the greatest beauty in Britain. "She was," he says, "of an ordinary stature, not too fat, her mien was majestic, her eyes full, her face was oval, and her complection was delicate and extremely fair. Besides all these perfections, she was a lady of

singular chastity; as her body was a finished piece, without the least blemish, so Heaven designed that her mind should want none of those perfections a mortal creature can be capable of; her modesty was admirable, her courage was above what could be expected from her sex, her judgment solid, her carriage was gaining and affable to her inferiors, as she knew well how to behave herself to her equals; she was descended from one of the most honorable and wealthy families of Scotland, and of great interest in the kingdom, but at that time eclipsed." This is the testimony of hearsay, but, allowing for exaggeration, the great impression which she made upon her contemporaries is amply shown.

The very nemesis of misfortune seemed to pursue this innocent lady. The next turn of envious fate brought to light a plot for her destruction which was hatched in the dark recesses of a heart burning with passionate resentment over its inability to invade her wifely integrity. William Lyon had been one of the suitors who were disappointed at her acceptance of the son of the Earl of Argyll. After several years had elapsed, this man sought to pass the limits of friendship, and had the baseness to seek to draw her away from the path of honor. Her contemptuous and indignant rebuff rankled in his mind, and led him to lay a deep plot tending to bring Lady Glamis under suspicion of attempting to poison the king. Her former indictment as a poisoner was counted upon to give probability to the charge. She, with all other persons under suspicion as parties to the plot, was arrested and immured in Edinburgh Castle.

So much of political matter entered into the testimony, and so skilfully was it wrought, that the jury found her guilty of the crimes charged, namely, treasonable communication with her relatives, the enemies of the king,

and of conspiring to poison her monarch. The sentence was that she should be burned at the stake, and the same day of its delivery it was executed. "She seemed to be the only unconcerned person there, and her beauty and charms never appeared with greater advantage than when she was led to the flames; and her soul being fortified with support from Heaven, and the sense of her own innocence, she outbraved death, and her courage was equal in the fire to what it was before her judges. She suffered those torments without the least noise: only she prayed devoutly for Divine assistance to support her under her sufferings." She died as a burnt offering to the hate which was engendered against her line, but which could be visited only upon her, as all others of her house were out of reach of the royal anger.

Returning to Ireland and leaving behind the atmosphere of political machinations and persecutions, it is pleasant to take up the characters of some women of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries who for different reasons have written their names lastingly in the memories of their race. To be hailed as the best woman of her times was the happy privilege of Margaret O'Carroll, who died in 1461. McFirbis, the antiquary of Lecan, her contemporary, says of her: "She was the one woman that made most of preparing highways, and erecting bridges, churches and mass-books, and of all manner of things profitable to serve God and her soul." Her life was most celebrated for her pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James of Compostella in Spain, and her unbounded charity. The pilgrimage followed upon a great revival of religion which seems to have swept over Ireland in 1445. The occasion of the awakening is not known, other than that following upon the signs of religious discontent upon the continent the monks of Ireland roused themselves to earnest and

arduous religious labors. The chronicler gives illustration of her practical charity in the account of her two "invitations": twice in the one year did she call upon all persons "Irish and Scottish" to bestow largely of their money and goods as a feast for the poor. Thousands resorted to the place of distribution, and, as each was aided in an orderly manner, they had their names and the amount and nature of their relief entered in a book kept for the purpose. In summing up her life's work, the chronicler says: "While the world lasts, her very many gifts to the Irish and Scottish nations cannot be numbered. God's blessing, the blessing of all saints, and every our blessing from Jerusalem to Innis Glauir be on her going to Heaven, and blessed be he that will reade and will heare this, for the blessing of her soule. Cursed be the sore in her breast that killed Margrett." Such a picture as this serves to offset the more usual idea of the women of Ireland during the Middle Ages as coarse, half-civilized beings. Such a character would lend dignity and worth to any people during any age.

The many benefactions and the public spirit of this great lady make her deserving of mention in any account of the development of charities. The poet D'Arcy McGee has immortalized her in a poem in which, referring to the occasion of her "great Invitation," he says:

> "In cloth of gold, like a queen new-come out of the royal wood
> On the round, proud, white-walled rath Margeret O'Carroll stood;
> That day came guests to Rath Imayn from afar from beyond the sea
> Bards and Bretons of Albyn and Erin—to feast in Offaly!"

To be celebrated for beauty alone is the prerogative of a few of the women of the ages. What nation is there that does not hold in as cherished regard the women who have represented its noblest physical possibilities as their

women of unusual sanctity or those who have glorified their literature or ennobled their arts? A beautiful woman —a woman whose beauty is not alone flawless in feature and full of the instinctive intellectuality of a soul mirrored in a countenance, but also typical of the expression of racial characteristics, is as much a product of ages, as much a climax of evolution at the point of perfection, as the saint, the artist, the dramatist who marks a period and exalts a people. To pass down in history as an exceptional beauty is to inspire art ideals and to furnish a theme for the lyricist. Frailty is often found united with such exceptional beauty, so is it with exceptional genius; alas! that predominating gifts should be so often inimical to balance. To find such beauty in the way of virtue is as grateful as to find an orchid exhaling perfume.

In the tales of fair women, the Fair Geraldine, who was born in the first half of the sixteenth century, must always be celebrated, not only as a typical Irish beauty, but as a woman whose virtues were of a similar order to her physical charms. She was the second daughter of the Earl of Kildare by his second wife, Lady Elizabeth Grey, and inherited from both sides of this union, which was most auspicious, the high breeding and gentle graces which fitted well her gracious carriage and great beauty and served, by enhancing her physical charms, to attract to her a wide circle of friends and to secure for her the knightly attendance of a band of distinguished suitors. She was taken to England to be educated, and at court received the polish which perfected the jewel of her beauty. She made her home with a second cousin of her mother, Lady Mary, who was afterward England's queen. While quite young she was appointed maid of honor to her kinswoman. Already her charms had ripened to the point of

eliciting from the poet, soldier, and politician, Henry, Earl of Surrey, the high praise of the following sonnet:

"From Tuscane came my lady's worthy race,
Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat.
The western isle, whose pleasant shore doth face
Wild Cambor's cliffs, did give her lively heat.
Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast;
Her sire an Earl, her dame of Princes' blood,
From tender years in Britain doth she rest,
With King's child; where she tasteth costly food.
Hunsdon did first present her to mine eyes;
Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight.
Hampton me taught to wish her first as mine,
And Windsor, alas! doth chase her from my sight.
Her beauty of kind; her virtues from above,
Happy is he that can attain her love."

The noble earl who lamented that Windsor chased her from his sight was suffering incarceration in Windsor Castle for eating meat in Lent. That the Fair Geraldine had made full conquest of his heart is shown by his conduct at a tournament at Florence, where he defied the world to produce her equal. He was victorious, and the palm was awarded the Irish beauty. Again, he is found resorting to a famous alchemist of the day to enable him to peer into the future, that he might know what disposition of her heart would be made by the lady of his affections. The only satisfaction he obtained was the seeing of Geraldine recumbent upon a couch reading one of his sonnets. This must have stirred his blood and have strengthened his faith in the ultimate success of his wooing. Had he obtained the revelation he sought, he would have seen the adored beauty, with that curious inconsistency of her sex, bestowing herself upon Sir Anthony Brown, a man sixty years of age, and who was forty-four years her senior. After his death she married the Earl of Lincoln, whom she also survived. There is no further record of the beauty

whose fame extended over England and Ireland. The circumstance of Surrey's visit to the alchemist has been preserved in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel:*

"Fair all the pageant—but how passing fair
The slender form that lay on couch of Ind!
O'er her white bosom strayed her hazel hair,
Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined;
All in her night-robe loose she lay reclined
And, pensive, read from tablet eburine
Some strain that seemed her inmost soul to find;
That favored strain was Surrey's raptured line,
That fair and lovely form, the Ladye Geraldine."

In the picturesque annals of the piracy of the sixteenth century, when England was getting that sea training which was to make her the undisputed naval power of the world, when the Turkish corsair spread the terror of his savage brutality through the hearts of the brave seamen who manned the craft of legitimate commerce, at a time when the trade routes of the sea were the paths of piracy, and the sabre, the cutlass, and the newly invented gunpowder were depended upon to establish the right of way for the ships of the nations, there appears no more daring character than Grainne O'Malley. Many stories of her prowess are still current in the west of Ireland, and the political ballads of her time make frequent allusion to the sea queen. For the greater part of the sixteenth century she lived, an example of that splendid virility which is yet characteristic of the hardy Irish peasantry, when not under the shadow of famine.

She came of right by her seafaring proclivities, for from the earliest period the O'Malleys have been celebrated as rivalling the Vikings in their love of the sea. In the fourteenth century a bard is found singing:

"A good man never was there
Of the O'Mailly's but a mariner;
The prophets of the weather are ye,
A tribe of affection and brotherly love."

Grainne O'Malley, with all her depredations upon the sea, was no common pirate; through her veins ran the royal blood of the line of Connaught, and, despite her serviceability to the English as a freebooting ally upon the western coasts of the island, she acknowledged no higher power than her own. Her title of dignity was regarded as inviolable. Quite worthy of the brush of an artist was the scene presented by the reception at court of the wild Irish chieftainess. Disdaining land travel, she performed the whole trip to London by water, sailing up the Thames to the Tower Gate. The little son who was born upon this voyage was fittingly called Theobald of the Ship. There has come down to us no account of the meeting of the two queens, but one may readily imagine the scene—the blonde Elizabeth, thin, unbeautiful, her scant features lined by petulance, but with indomitable will shown in the turn of her mouth and the strength of her chin, and the large-limbed, full-bodied Irish woman, dressed in the semi-wild attire of her race and of her calling, her arms, her wrists, her ankles, gleaming with circlets of gold, a fillet of massive metal binding her hair, her mantle caught up at the shoulder by an immense, ornately wrought brooch. Courteously, but with no sign of inferiority in her demeanor, her swarthy skin showing the dash of Spanish blood in her veins, and her eyes flashing with the light of an unconquered spirit, stood the female buccaneer before the woman who had rule of England. The best tradition of the results of the interview tell us that a treaty was effected between the two, but that the Irish chieftainess did not yield an iota of her royal claims.

Thus was cemented a union between the English throne and the piratical leader. It must be borne in mind, however, that piracy was not then the despicable vice that it afterward came to be regarded. The commerce of the

enemy was always lawful spoil, and, even when there was not actually a state of hostilities existing between countries, preying upon one another's commerce was often regarded as a semi-legitimate industry; and if the free-booter kept out of reach of the enemy, he was not likely to be seriously sought out for punishment by the authorities of his own country. The exploiters of the New World, under the title of merchant-adventurers, were for the most part pirates; the Spanish galleons were always lawful spoil for the English merchantman, who knew the trick of painting out the name of his craft, giving it a garb of piratical black, using a false flag, spoiling the enemy after some swift, hard fighting, and then resuming again his real or assumed pacific character. In the light of her times must Grainne O'Malley be regarded.

As a sea queen she is without parallel in any time; and if the stain of their piracy does not attach to her English contemporaries, Drake, Raleigh, and Gilbert, no more should it to her. By force of a powerful individuality, she ruled a race of men who were noted as the most lawless of all Ireland, men among whom women as a class were so little esteemed that they were not allowed to hold property. An early traditional account of this woman of the waves, which is preserved in manuscript at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, describes her as follows:

"She was a great pirate and plunderer from her youth. It is Transcended to us by Tradition that the very Day she was brought to bed of her first Child that a Turkish Corsair attacked her ships, and that they were Getting the Better of her Men, she got up, put her Quilt about her and a string about her neck, took two Blunder Bushes in her hands, came on deck, began damming and Capering about, her monstrous size and odd figure surprised the Turks, their officers gathered themselves talking of her; this

was what she wanted, stretched both her hands, fired the two Blunder Bushes at them and Destroyed the officers." Many are the deeds of prowess ascribed to her, and so widespread was her fame that desperate characters came from all parts to enroll themselves under her standard. Her serviceability to the English, to whose extending power she had the good sense not to put herself in opposition, secured to her the right to continue her depredations.

With all her daring and the romance with which tradition has surrounded her, she was not, nor does the report of her times represent her as having been, handsome. In fact, notwithstanding that the Anglicized form of her given name is Grace, its real meaning is "the ugly." Her first husband was an O'Flaherty, the terror of which name is preserved in the litany of the Anglo-Norman, recalling the capture of the city of Galway and the surrounding country: "From the ferocious O'Flaherties,—Good Lord, deliver us." The same words, as a talisman, were inscribed over the gate of the city. We know little of the representative of this family who became the husband of Grainne O'Malley. Her second husband was Sir Richard Bourke, of the Mayo division of a great Norman-Irish clan. It was after contracting this alliance that Grainne O'Malley put herself under the protection of the English rule in Connaught. Sidney, the lord-deputy, referring to his visit to Galway in 1576, says: "There came to me a most famous female sea-captain, called Granny-I-Mallye, and offered her services to me, wheresoever I would command her, with three galleys and two hundred fighting men, either in Ireland or Scotland. She brought with her her husband, for she was, as well by sea as by land, more than master's mate with him. He was of the nether Bourkes, and now, as I hear, MacWilliam Euter, and called by the nickname 'Richard in Iron.' This was a notorious woman in all the

coasts of Ireland. This woman did Sir Philip see and speak with: he can more at large inform you of her."

The personal character of this female buccaneer was never called into question; saving only her piratical proclivities, she seems to have been exemplary. The circumstances of her life at the death of her first husband forced her, a daughter of a pirate, to the seas as a "thrade of maintenance," as she apologetically put it to Queen Elizabeth. She founded and endowed religious houses, and the attitude she maintained toward the powers higher than she was in the furtherance of the peace of her country. Yet her good deeds have not been borne in the same remembrance as her piratical performances. With this account of the adventurous Irish woman, we may turn to a very different picture, taken from Scotland.

The annals of the Scottish border are replete with stories of cruel warfare and of savage vengeance. The wars of England with the valorous Scots present hardly more instances of heroism and of brutality than do the accounts of the feuds which arose between the clans themselves. Of the first sort was the expedition which Bluff King Hal sent out to punish the Scots for becoming incensed at the insolent tone and the humiliating conditions he imposed on the negotiations looking to the marriage of his young son, afterward Edward VI., and the infant Mary, Queen of Scots.

The English conducted a series of savage forays across the Scottish border. Their success led the leaders of the invading army to represent to Henry that, owing to the distracted condition of Scotland on account of the internal disorders, the time was peculiarly auspicious for a permanent conquest of a large part of the border. Under commission of the English king to effect such a conquest, they returned and renewed their attack. The tower of Broomhouse, held by an aged woman and her family, was consigned

to the flames, and she and her children perished in the conflagration. Melrose Abbey was wantonly plundered and ruined, and the bones of the Douglases were taken from their tombs and scattered about. Next, the little village of Maxton was burned. All its inhabitants had made good their escape excepting a maiden of high courage and deep devotion, who remained with her bed-ridden parents. The approach of the enemy meant their destruction. The village maid had a lover, who, on finding that she was not with the refugees, returned to the town and forcibly carried her off, although he was grievously wounded in the act of doing so. After he had effected her rescue, the brave savior, breathing with his expiring breath a prayer of thankfulness that he had been permitted to yield up his life for her who was more than life to him, died of exhaustion and of his wounds. The measure of iniquity was complete, and, although many other bloody deeds were perpetrated in this warfare, the instrument of vengeance was at hand; when the hour came that marked a turn in the tide:

> "Ancrum Moor
> Ran red with English blood;
> Where the Douglas true and the bold Buccleuch
> 'Gainst keen Lord Evers stood."

When the battle was over and the English had been driven with great slaughter from the field, the body of the English general was found near that of a young Scottish soldier with flowing yellow tresses, who was mangled by many wounds. The delicacy of feature soon led to the discovery that the slayer of the English leader was a woman, and her identification as the maiden Liliard of the hamlet of Maxton followed. So had she avenged the cruel slaughter of her aged and helpless parents and that of the devoted lover who had laid down his life in her behalf. In a borrowed

suit of armor and weapons she had arrayed herself under the Red Douglas, that she might seek out him who was the author of her calamities, to visit upon him the vengeance of her desolation, and yield up the life she no longer valued.

Upon the bloody field her compatriots interred her who was thereafter to be held in dear regard as one of Scotland's noblest daughters. Above the head of "Liliard of Ancrum" was erected a gravestone with the following inscription to commemorate her valor:

> "Fair maiden Liliard lies under this stane,
> Little was her stature, but great was her fame;
> Upon the English loons she laid mony thumps,
> And when her legs were cutted off, she fought upon her stumps."

Ancrum Moor was fought in 1544. James V. had died two years earlier, and the crown of Scotland had devolved upon his infant daughter, Mary. Henry VIII. was bent on securing the Scotch kingdom, and to that end persisted in urging the betrothal of Prince Edward to the infant Mary, Queen of Scots; but the Scots were equally averse to the alliance, hence Henry continued to harass the kingdom by armed forces. After Edward VI. succeeded his father, he continued to sue for Mary's hand, and made use of military force in the hope of accomplishing his object. The child-queen's safety being in constant jeopardy, she was betrothed to the Dauphin of France, and in 1548 left for the court of France. In her sixteenth year she married Francis, making at the same time a secret treaty bestowing the kingdom of Scotland on France, in case she died without an heir. Francis II., however, died in 1560, and Mary returned to Scotland the following year. Here, her Roman Catholic practices soon brought her into conflict with Knox, but for a time she managed to rule without serious troubles. Romantic adventure, however, best

describes the life of this lovely queen. She was beset with suitors and pestered with intrigue for her favor. The most popularly known story in connection with her life is that of her relation to Rizzio, her Italian confidant. He it was who arranged Mary's marriage to Darnley, and it was his influence over her that finally led to his own assassination by Darnley and his companions in Holyrood Palace in 1566. Shortly thereafter the queen gave birth to Prince James; and from this time troubles and conspiracies constantly involved the unhappy queen, until her execution in 1586 for her association in the Babington conspiracy against the life of Queen Elizabeth.

It was while the partisans of Queen Mary and those of her young son James were imbruing the soil of Scotland with one another's blood, and when all the horrors of internecine warfare were being perpetrated, there was lighted a flame that added a heroine to the country's list of women who have honorably earned that title. There appeared one day before Corgaff Castle, in Strathdon, Captain Kerr and a party of men, sent by the deputy lieutenant of the queen, Sir Adam Gordon of Auchindown, to capture and to hold it. Between the houses of Gordon and Forbes existed a deadly feud, although they were united by marriage. The Forbeses had espoused the cause of the king, while the Gordons were arrayed on the side of the queen. This added to the bitterness of their feeling, and accounts for the stubbornness which Lady Towie displayed when called upon to surrender. Her husband, John Forbes, the Laird of Towie, was in the field with his three sons; the defence of the castle accordingly fell upon her. When the Gordons appeared before the castle and demanded its subjection, its noble defender replied in such scornful terms to Captain Kerr, the leader of the besieging force, that he swore that he would wipe

out the stigma of her insult with her blood. As it was impossible to carry the castle by assault without the aid of artillery, he resorted to fire—not, however, before the brave lady had shot her pistol at him pointblank, missing her aim, but yet grazing the captain's knee with the bullet.

In spite of the plea of her sick stepson, she resolutely determined to perish in the flames which were spreading through the castle from the fire started by the enemy in a breach of the castle wall.

This incident of the siege is described in an old ballad:

"Oh, then out spake her youngest son,
Sat on the nurse's knee:
Says—'Mither, dear, gie o'er this house,
For the reek it smithers me.'

"'I would gie all my gold, my bairn,
Sae would I all my fee,
For ae blast o' the Westlin' wind
To blaw the reek frae thee.'"

Next, her daughter appealed to her that she might be sewed up in a sheet and let down the tower wall. To this the mother assented. The maiden was thus lowered to the ground, only to be received upon the spear of the brutal captain:

"O then out spake her daughter dear,
She was baith jimp and small:
'Oh, row me in a pair of sheets,
And tow me o'er the wall.'
. . . . . .
"Oh, bonnie, bonnie was her mouth,
And cherry was her cheeks;
And clear, clear was her yellow hair,
Whereon the red bluid dreeps.
. . . . . .
"Then with his spear he turned her o'er;
Oh, gin her face was wan!
He said—'You are the first that e'er
I wish'd alive again.'"

Of the thirty-seven persons in the castle, Lady Towie, her stepson, her three young children, and her retainers, none escaped the holocaust; the roof of the keep fell in and carried them down into the flames. So perished one of the bravest and most spirited women of her times. The retribution which, in the later circumstances of the feud, was wrought upon those responsible for this massacre does not concern us here. The heroism of Lady Towie's defence of Corgaff Castle has furnished a theme for other poets than the obscure bard whom we have quoted; the bravery to the point of rashness which she displayed endears her to the heart of the Scotchman who glories in the deeds of courage of his race.

One of the sweetest stories of devotion to be found in the history of Scotland's women is that which centres about the knightly house of Cromlix and Ardoch. Sir James Chisholm was born in the early part of the sixteenth century, and, as a youth, was sent to France for the completion of his education. Before his departure he had exchanged with fair Helen Stirling, of the house of Ardoch, vows of undying affection. This young lady, because of her beauty, had achieved wide local celebrity, and throughout the countryside she was called "Fair Helen of Ardoch." The two young people had been brought up in each other's society, and, as they grew in years, began to feel for each other that tenderness of sentiment which, while they were yet in their teens, led to mutual avowals of love. Their parents were not averse to the match, after the young people should have arrived at a more suitable age for marriage. The course of their love ran smoothly, until the separation came by Sir James going abroad. As their relatives were not favorable to a correspondence between the young people, the good offices of a friend were invoked. He received the letters of both

parties, and saw that they were sent to their respective destinations. The correspondence went happily on; his letters were full of pleasing gossip about the belles and beauties of France, of society and manners, everything, indeed, that a young lover of reflective and poetic temperament would be likely to pen to the lady of his heart from whom he was separated by a distance which could be made communicable only by correspondence.

Almost a year had sped away when the letters received by Helen became less frequent and then stopped. She wrote again and again, but in vain; she received no replies. The agent of the young people then professed to write himself to her recreant lover, and informed her that he had discovered that the attachment of the young man for her had waned and that he was to marry a French beauty. His condolence was apparently so sincere and delicately phrased that when he proffered her his love there was in her breast some degree of kindly sentiment toward him, which, while of a very different nature from her feeling for the one who had discarded her, was yet such as to lead her to assent finally to his suit; not, however, before many considerations had been skilfully brought to bear upon her, not the least of which were the desires of her kindred.

The wedding day was set, and before the assembled guests, forming a brilliant gathering, the bride appeared in rich adornings, but pale, her bosom heaving with sobs. The ceremony was performed. Then occurred a dramatic scene; some whisper seemed to reach the bride's ear; to the amazement of the guests, she turned upon her husband and denounced him as the blackest of traitors. She declared that her own letters and those of her lover had been kept back, and that she knew that her lover had landed in Scotland and would vindicate his honor. She vowed in the

presence of Heaven that she would never acknowledge as her husband the man she had just wedded, nor would she ever leave for him her father's roof. Amid shouts of derision, the false bridegroom hastily left the house. The young lover had indeed landed in the country, and was hastening to his beloved that he might prove to her that he had been grossly slandered and she grievously deceived. The knowledge of the situation did not reach him in time to forestall the plans of his rival, and not until his arrival home did he find out the full facts of the case and have his mind entirely relieved of the thought of his love's perfidy. Legal measures were speedily taken for the dissolution of the hateful bonds, and the young lady was united to the one to whom, notwithstanding her acquiescence in the wishes of others, her heart had been true.

The maid of Ardoch's story has been variously told. The most familiar form of it is that found in Robert Burns's *Observations on Scottish Songs*. The romance has taken strong hold upon the hearts of the Scotch race, through a simple melody which has held the interest of the people for nearly three centuries. This ballad was written by the young lover himself on board the ship that was bearing him back to Scotland. The first verse is as follows:

"Since all thy vows, false maid,
Are blown to air,
And my poor heart betrayed
To sad despair,
Into some wilderness,
My grief I will express,
And thy hard-heartedness,
O cruel fair!"

As fearless as the Scotch heroine Lady Towie in the defence of her castle was the Irish heroine Lettice, Baroness of Ophaly, in the famous defence of the castle of Geashill

in Queen's County. The one lived in the sixteenth, the other belonged to the seventeenth century. The Baroness Ophaly was of the famous house of Geraldine, heir in general to the house of Kildare, and inherited the barony of Geashill. She married Sir Robert Digby, and after his death returned to Ireland. She was a model mistress to her household and her tenantry. Although a woman of brilliant attainments, she was yet content to live in a quiet way, performing the congenial duties of administrator of the affairs of her household, and being held in affectionate regard by all those dependent upon her. In 1641, however, the quiet current of her daily life was broken in its flow; civil war devastated the land. The rebels thought to find in the defenceless situation of the widowed lady, with her brood of young children, an opportunity for plunder and ravage with little prospect of serious resistance. A motley throng appeared before the castle and demanded possession. They then presented to her a written order as follows: "We, his Majesty's loyal subjects, at the present employed in his Highness's service, for the sacking of your castle; you are therefore to deliver unto us the free possession of your said castle, promising faithfully that your ladyship, together with the rest within your said castle *resiant,* shall have reasonable composition; otherwise, upon the non-yielding of the castle, we do assure you that we shall burn the whole town, kill all the Protestants, and spare neither woman nor child, upon taking the castle by compulsion. Consider, madam, of this our offer; impute not the blame of your folly unto us. Think not that here we brag. Your ladyship, upon submission, shall have safe convoy to secure you from the hands of your enemies, and to lead you whither you please. A speedy reply is desired with all expedition, and then we surcease."

To this demand she sent a reply temperate and dignified, but unyielding. It was as follows:

"I received your letter wherein you threaten to sack this my castle by his Majesty's authority. I have ever been a loyal subject and a good neighbor among you, and therefore cannot but wonder at such an assault. I thank you for your offer of a convoy, wherein I hold little safety; and therefore my resolution is that, being free from offending his Majesty, or doing wrong to any of you, I will live and die innocently. I will do the best to defend my own, leaving the issue to God; and though I have been, I am still desirous to avoid shedding blood, yet, being provoked, your threats shall no way dismay me."

The rebels took no notice of her answer, but kept up the siege. After two months, Lord Viscount Clanmalier brought to bear against the castle a piece of ordnance. Before using this formidable instrument, which was cast by a local ironworker out of pots and pans contributed for the purpose, Clanmalier, who was her kinsman, sent her a letter repeating the demand for the surrender of the castle. She replied to this missive, which was signed "your loving cousin," by saying that she had not expected such treatment at the hands of a kinsman, repeating her innocence of wrong-doing, and expressing her adherence to her position as stated in her former reply to similar demands.

After this answer had been delivered to his lordship he discharged the home-made cannon at the castle, and it promptly exploded at the first shot; to which fact was due the ability of Baroness Ophaly to hold the castle against all attack through the long months until the rebellion had waned and the besiegers withdrew. What she must have suffered during all the dangers of the siege, in which ingenuity was taxed to the utmost to effect an

entrance within the strong walls, can never be stated; on the one hand was the terror of famine, on the other, death. When she was rescued from her perilous situation by Sir Richard Greville, she went to her husband's late property of Colehill and there spent the remainder of her life, dying in 1648.

Among the Scotch Covenanters, the names of Isobel Alison of Perth and Marion Harvie of Bo'ness take high rank because of their undaunted courage and the strength of conviction displayed by them. It was in 1679 that a band of horsemen slew Archbishop Sharp upon Magnus Moor and then dispersed. Four of them, among whom was John Balfour of Kinloch,—the redoubtable Burley of *Old Mortality*,—took refuge in the house of a widow of the vicinity of Perth. Here they remained hidden, to watch as to what steps would be taken in regard to their apprehension. Afterward they retired to Dupplin, thereby escaping seizure. On June 22d the battle of Bothwell Brig was fought and lost to the Covenanters. At about this time the first subject of this sketch, Isobel Alison, an obscure maiden, comes into the stream of historical occurrence. She was about twenty-five years of age, resided at Perth, and was of excellent repute. She had been trained in the strictest Presbyterian faith, and was well versed in the Scriptures. She had occasionally had the privilege of hearing field preaching, although field conventicles were not common in the country. Her sympathies with the persecuted ministers of her faith and her personal acquaintance with several of them enlisted her aid for the fugitives in hiding them from the authorities, whose search for them was relentlessly pursued. The work of bloody persecution continued for eighteen months, during which many of the Covenanters died in the maintenance of their convictions. But it was not until the end of 1680 that

Isobel attracted attention by reason of her outspoken utterances against the tyranny under which the country suffered. It was not long, then, before she was arraigned for her sentiments, and, in the simplicity of her nature, volunteered the confession that she was in communication with some of those who had been declared rebels. The magistrates, however, charitably sought to shield her from the effects of actions the serious purport of which they did not believe that she fully realized, and so dismissed her with a caution to be more circumspect in her speech. But she was not to escape thus easily; some busybodies speedily reported what she had said to the Privy Council, which issued a warrant for her arrest. Under a charge of treason, she was carried from the peaceful seclusion of her humble home, and immured in the prison at Edinburgh. At her hearing before the Privy Council, she acknowledged to acquaintance with all those for whom the authorities were seeking as assassins of Archbishop Sharp. When asked if she did not know that she was aiding those whose hands were dyed with the blood of murder, she replied that she had never regarded the death of the "Mr. James Sharp" as being murder. Her testimony was so self-condemnatory that, according to the law of the day, there appeared to be no recourse but to sentence her to hanging. She says: "The Lords pitied me, for [said they] we find reason and a quick wit in you; and they desired me to take it to advisement. I told them I had been advising on it these seven years, and I hoped not to change now. They asked if I was distempered? I told them that I was always solid in the wit that God had given me." She was then remanded for trial before the Judiciary Court. Leaving the thread of her story for a while, we will take up that of another young woman, who at about this time had come under a like accusation and was suffering imprisonment.

She was but a poor serving woman, who had been a domestic at the house of a woman who had sheltered one of the same fugitives whose cause had gotten Isobel Alison into her straits. The story of her relations with the Covenanters, as told by her to the authorities, was a simple one. From the age of fourteen she had heard the field preaching of the Covenanters, and finally she had been informed against and arrested. Her demeanor during the ordeal of examination was firm and composed. The questions put to her she answered without hesitancy or reservation. The result of the examination showed her full sympathies with those who were under the taint of rebellion and treason. She justified their acts by affirming that the king had broken his covenant oath, and it was lawful to disown him.

She and her older sister in misfortune were brought together before the Judiciary Court, and both of the young women declined to acknowledge the authority of the king and lords. There was nothing remaining to do but to put them on trial, which was accordingly done. They both stood indicted for treason. The only evidence adduced against them was their own confessions, and because of the nature of these a verdict of guilty was rendered. The court postponed sentence until the following Friday, when they were condemned to be hanged. Not a particle of proof had been produced of their having joined in concocting any schemes against either Church or State; they had simply let their tongues wag too freely upon the impersonal question, so far as it concerned them, as to whether a certain assassination was justified. The prosecution had been conducted by the king's advocate, Sir George Mackenzie, that "noble wit of Scotland," as he was styled by Dryden, but whom the Scotch people have branded as the "bluidy Mackenzie" of the popular rhyme. This same

advocate who secured the sentencing of the two young girls for expressions of opinion upon a question which was purely one of casuistry wrote in one of his *Essays:* "Human nature inclines us wisely to that pity which we may one day need; and few pardon the severity of a magistrate, because they know not where it may stop."

During the period intervening between their condemnation and their execution, they were visited by kindly disposed ministers of the Established Church and others, who sought to persuade them out of their beliefs. But to no purpose; even the promise of a full pardon failed to move either of them from the steadfastness of their expressed convictions. In order to surround their execution with as much of ignominy as possible, it was ordered that five women, convicted of the murder of their illegitimate children, should be hanged along with them. In their last hour upon earth, the young women were sustained by the fortitude of their faith. The attempt to make them hear the ministrations of a curate was frustrated by the two young women singing together the Twenty-third Psalm. Upon the scaffold they continued their religious devotions; and in the midst of their calm, confident declarations of faith in Christ and of their innocence of any real wrong, they perished.

The transit from religion to pleasure is, after all, but a short passage from one department of life to another, and the story of the women of Scotland and of Ireland would not be complete without notice of some of that group of famous Irish women who were conspicuous upon the stage of Great Britain in the eighteenth century—women whose excellence served to raise the dramatic art to the point of prominence and dignity which it attained during that period. One of the earliest of that group who gave lustre to the stage was Margaret Woffington. The story of her

life is a record of high achievement in the histrionic profession, although it is as well a record of frailty—a fact unfortunately too often true of actresses in the eighteenth century, when the standards of their art were supposed to absolve them to an extent from the ordinary demands of circumspection in conduct. She had all the susceptibility of the Celtic temperament, and her warm Irish blood was easily made to surge through her veins in waves of passion, although, when not indulging in a fit of temper, she was bright, vivacious, witty, and entertaining to a degree. Arthur Murphy, in his *Life of Garrick,* says: "Forgive her one female error, and it might fairly be said of her that she was adorned with every virtue; honour, truth, benevolence, and charity were her distinguishing qualities." This much said for the weakness of her character, we can concern ourselves altogether with the strength of her genius. The circumstances of her birth were not fortunate, nor was there anything in them to predicate the distinguished place she was to fill in the public eye. The year of her birth is variously given. It was probably in 1714 that she first saw the light, in a miserable slum of the city of Dublin. Her father was a bricklayer, and died when she was but five years old. At that early age she had to take her part of the home responsibilities and earn money to aid in the support of her family; this she did by serving as a water carrier. The advent of a French dancer into Dublin at about this time marked an epoch in the life of Peggy. She brought with her a troupe of acrobats and rope dancers, and the exhibition she offered attracted large audiences. In order to afford a novel feature, which should at the same time affect local interest, Madame Violante, the head of the amusement company, arranged for an operatic presentation which should be participated in by some of the bright Irish children to

whom she had been drawn. The *Beggars' Opera* was then in the height of its popularity, and this was the play she fixed upon. Little Peggy Woffington, not quite ten years old, had the chief female part. From this simple introduction to the amusement-loving public started the train of development in the life of this young Irish girl, which was to make her the captivating actress, the beautiful and witty woman, who bewitched Garrick and Sheridan.

The novelty of the conception attracted much notice, and the opera was given before large houses. Other plays and farces were staged in the same way. While Peggy played principal parts on the stage, her mother sold oranges to the patrons at the entrance to the theatre. Matters continued this way until Peggy Woffington was sixteen years of age, by which time she had become noted for ease and grace as a dancer, although her coarseness of voice and pronounced brogue debarred her from any important playing part. Her opportunity came, however, when a favorite actress who was to take the part of Ophelia was, at the eleventh hour, incapacitated from so doing. There was no recourse but to permit Peggy Woffington to take it. Notwithstanding the difficulties under which she labored, her interpretation of the character was quite favorably received. She had been developing in grace of figure and of feature, and had ripened into a young woman of dazzling fairness, perfect form, with eyes luminous and black, shaded by long lashes and arched by exquisitely pencilled eyebrows.

She was just twenty years of age when she completely turned the heads of the Dublin theatre-goers by the magnificence of her impersonation of Sir Harry Wildare in *The Constant Couple*. Her first appearance in London was not at the behest of her art, but, unfortunately, as a result of the arts of an admirer to whose addresses she had given

some favor, and who led her to go to the English metropolis with him under promise of marriage. This regrettable circumstance was soon followed by her repudiation of the man on finding out his real character. She was not long off the stage, and in 1740 the playbills announced the first appearance of Miss Woffington in England. She drew large houses, and greatly widened her reputation as a leading actress of her time. To give the plays in which she took principal parts during her first London season would be to enumerate the best productions of the English stage at that time. It is said of her that before the season was half over, Miss Woffington had become the fashion. Among the many swains who followed in her wake and indited to her amorous missives and verses was Garrick. He pursued his lovemaking with all seriousness, and made his assault not solely upon the heart of the butterfly beauty, but upon her mind as well. He saw that beneath all the audacities of her mind and irregularities of life there was a noble nature, which the circumstances of her birth and training had never permitted true expression. His intentions were entirely honorable, but whenever the subject of marriage was broached by him she managed to switch off the conversation to a lighter subject. Her coquettishness would not permit her to take seriously the addresses of the man whom she doubtless greatly admired and loved. When she was regarded by everyone else as without a moral equivalent for her artistic temperament, Garrick steadfastly refused to regard her simply as a vain, flighty, and vacillating person. He was rewarded by being the only man whom she ever seriously thought of marrying.

Her mode of life was not conducive to the furtherance of her health, and at the comparatively early age of thirty-seven years her friends saw a change both in the demeanor and the appearance of the witty woman. The seeds of

an internal disorder had been sown, but, with her usual recklessness, she failed to heed the premonitions of nature until the malady was too far advanced for cure. At about this time the famous John Wesley was stirring London with his preaching. She attended his chapel through curiosity, and afterward from conviction. She was clear-headed and honest enough to see the force of the religious truth which he presented, and was brought quite under the influence of the great preacher. As a result of the awakening of her religious nature, she determined on the reformation of her private life, although she does not appear to have linked with that the purpose of quitting her profession. She resolved, however, not to remain before the public until they tired of her. As she herself expressed it: "I will never destroy my reputation by clinging to the shadow after the substance is gone. When I can no longer bound on the boards with elastic step, and when the enthusiasm of the public begins to show symptoms of decay, that night will be the last appearance of Margaret Woffington."

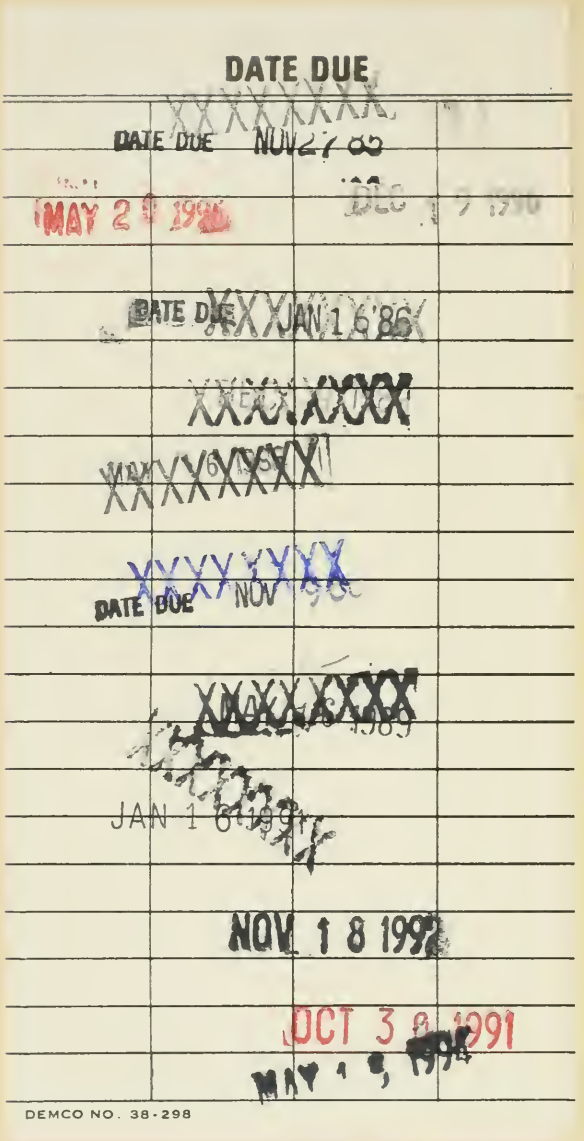
She was not destined to remain before the public until they wearied of her; on May 3, 1757, she appeared as Rosalind in *As You Like It*. The circumstances of the tragic close of her dramatic career, as quoted from a contemporary writer in Blackburn's *Illustrious Irish Women*, were as follows: "She went through Rosalind for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered; but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted; I thought she looked softened in her behaviour, and had less of the hauteur. When she came off at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill, but got accoutred, and returned to finish the part, and pronounced in the epilogue speech,—'If it be true that good wine needs no bush, it is

as true that a good play needs no epilogue,' &c., &c. But when she arrived at 'If I were among you, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me,' her voice broke, she faltered, endeavoured to go on, but could not proceed; then, in a voice of tremor, screamed, 'O God! O God!' and tottered to the stage door speechless, where she was caught. The audience, of course, applauded until she was out of sight, and then sunk into awful looks of astonishment—both young and old, before and behind the curtain—to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being about forty-four."

Such were the circumstances attending the last appearance of Margaret Woffington, who, notwithstanding she died in the prime of life at the age of forty-seven, had been for twenty-seven years the delight of the play-going public. The three years she lingered as a mere skeleton of her former self were spent in trying to awaken the consciences of her late theatrical associates. Some of these scouted her new spirit as hypocrisy, and insinuated that religion was her recourse only when beauty and spirits had been lost. But the One who judgeth the secrets of men's hearts is not so uncharitable in His judgment of His creatures. It may be believed that the influence which she received from the chapel meetings of John Wesley was the beginning of a genuine religious life and character, and that it brought from her Maker that commendation which was ungenerously denied her by her associates.

These brief sketches of the lives of some of the daughters of Scotland and of Ireland illustrate the principal characteristics of the women of the Scotch-Irish race. Among all the nations of the world no women hold as high a place

for pure morals and high courage. The spiritualizing effect of the profound religious feeling of these people—although in the form of their religious faith the Scotch and the Irish are for the most part so diametrically different—accounts in a large measure for their conservation of the facts and forces of the religious life. The soil of both Ireland and Scotland was bedewed for centuries with the tears of affliction and of persecution; the blood of martyrs who cheerfully laid down their lives at the dictates of religion and that highest social expression of the religious instinct, the noblest piety of the human race—patriotism. Out of all the oppression, rapacity, confiscation, which the two peoples experienced in different forms and different degrees, arose an unworldly ideal, a sense of the invisible realm. The sturdy Calvinist matron of the Scottish Highlands is no more religious, no more the product of the travails of her country, no more under the inspiration and exaltation of high principle, than her less fortunately placed sister of the Green Isle, whose religion is at the opposite extreme of the forms of Christian faith. The women of both peoples can point with tearful joy to the history of their sex as a scroll of fame and a record of noble achievement.



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